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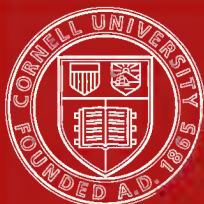
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The daughter of Bugle Ann.



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THE DAUGHTER OF BUGLE ANN

BOOKS BY **MacKinlay Kantor**

Fiction

DIVERSEY
EL GOES SOUTH
THE JAYBIRD
LONG REMEMBER
THE VOICE OF BUGLE ANN
AROUSE AND BEWARE
THE ROMANCE OF ROSY RIDGE
THE NOISE OF THEIR WINGS
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GLORY FOR ME
MIDNIGHT LACE
WICKED WATER
THE GOOD FAMILY
SIGNAL THIRTY-TWO
DON'T TOUCH ME
WARWHOOP

Juvenile

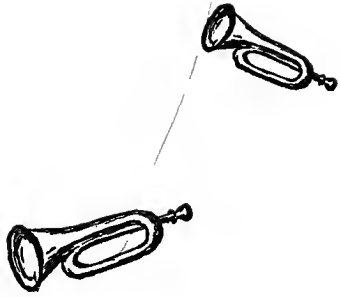
ANGLEWORMS ON TOAST
LEE AND GRANT AT APPOMATTOX
GETTYSBURG

Autobiographical

BUT LOOK, THE MORN

Verse

TURKEY IN THE STRAW



**The Daughter
of Bugle Ann**

by MacKinlay Kantor

Random House, New York

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To Burl Ives

THE DAUGHTER OF BUGLE ANN

AWAY BACK SOMEWHERE there must have been a man who had a dog, and one time something happened to her, and she didn't come home, although the man kept the fire up all night long.

And he crawled back into his deep hole among the rocks, and he tried to sleep, but his love and his conscience wouldn't let him relax in slumber, because all the time he kept thinking about his dog out yonder, the dog he was depending on, the dog who was depending on him. Something terrible must have happened to the dog. So the man would get up and walk barefoot to the front of his cave, and look off across ragged valleys,

and listen for baying and never hear a sound, and go back, and twist himself beside his fire again. The sleep he sought could never find him, nor could he find it.

All through wicked hours he waited and wondered, it seems like; and he felt bad because there was an empty space in the dust where the dog had lain before. There was no mass of firm warm hair for him to touch when he reached his hand, nor rough wetness scratching across his hide in reply. The dog's tongue was not rubbing him, and its smell was not comforting within his nose (for people depended a lot on smell in those days) and the man searched for a smell just as much as he needed to hear the animal's signal in the woodland beneath the hilltop where he dwelt.

Then, in the blackest hour of all, the man fell asleep because he was tired out, and the dog came to him while he was asleep. Maybe she had got herself restrained by a river she couldn't get back across; maybe a mountain or a cyclone had been in the way. It could be that she got herself bitten by sharp-jawed beasts which occupied the spaces between, and so for a while she was too weak even to crawl. Or possibly the fires or torrents of a rough new world withheld her, wounds and all; but eventually she came, on all fours or crawling.

Up the cruel heights she made her path, and if she had to paint her blood across the stones, she painted it bright. But come she did, in blackness or in light, and it's believable that the hairy man sprang up lively when he sensed her coming. •

He didn't talk to her about the perils she had known, for probably he couldn't even talk, and surely she could never tell him. He merely put his hands on her, and knew once more the strong coarse smell of her skin, and let her tongue come bathing him. More truly than not he said in his heart, "I'm glad you're back. I kept the fire up, a-waiting," and then in human fashion, if indeed she wasn't hurt, he must have given her a slap or two with his hard hand. Maybe she yelped, and crawled away to lie down, and so he lay down also, hearing her tail swat the earth whenever he moved.

So she was back, and he had feared she would never come. She was a portion of his life again, when he had thought that she was out of it. She dreamed with nose upon her paws, whether she carried pups now or never, whether she had run through mysteries he could never understand.

Oh, wild rivers and deadfalls would be forgotten in time—the thorns and teeth that had raked her flesh—because there was one special fire and spot in the mountains that she must return to. She had found it. While the man slept with relief his dog crouched low in her comfort.

You won't discover this in any book, nor are we as positive of it as we are of texts inscribed within the Bible. But men and dogs started out about the same time. They must have, or people wouldn't go digging and find their bones nestled together in the soil. So I guess this all must have happened some time, a hundred centuries ago or more, back somewhere.

My name is Baker Royster, and my father used to go hilltopping with Benjy and Springfield Davis. I went along. The majority of us folks in that Missouri country were people who appreciated the spout of flames in a woodfire, when hounds were making music across the hills.

You couldn't surround a fire and you couldn't breed and run hounds together among those pretty verdures—not for years on end, as we did—without knowing each other inside and out: muscle, purse and heart as well.

Thus I realized what made Benjy Davis tick, in those years when of necessity he never mentioned the name of the girl he had grown to love. In a gayer season, and with relief, I stood beside him when he was joined to Camden Terry; following on, there waxed the private tendernesses and beauties, the little blissful babyish things which they observed between them.

Take violets. First springtime after that young man was married, I found him at sunup in a flat ravine which spread off from Broken Gully. Rich purple violets: his strong brown hands were full of them, and it was something strange for me to confront Benjy burdened with posies in the damp sweet gloom of early morning, when I was hunting for a hound I'd lost.

I reckon that if he'd scented the appearance of anyone else, he would have scattered his new-plucked blossoms far and wide before he let himself be captured with them, like a little child. But Benjy Davis had Indian ears as well as Indian mannerisms (we always

imagined that there was a swipe of the red-brush, somewhere in the family ancestry). He knew that the person who approached was only myself, Bake Royster, before I'd broken my way through the vines and stood before him.

I stared: it couldn't be helped, for at times he wore a silent menace in his spirit. He was not the type to go a-flower-picking when there were chores waiting on the farm.

"Camden," he said, and held the bouquets up to show me.

"She sent you gathering them?"

He shook his head. "She loves violets. Likes the yellow ones quite well, but these blue ones just set her crazy. I figured they were out by now, and thought I should bring her— Well—" He flushed. "A small surprise."

Anyone might understand what made him do it, loving Camden as he did, for her eyes held the very color of those blooms.

. . . The simple things: the eat-together, work-together, play-together life of newlyweds who have no other current problems, and never have acquired children yet. They savored these frail spiritual belongings; they never told to others the miracle they shared, but still it was apparent.

The chili—I remember that. In times before he married, Benjy used to walk the streets of our county seat, Wolf Center, on a Saturday night with other boys. We had a Greek named Johnny who drove a little wagon;

it was painted bright with signs. "Johnny's Chili Chariot," it said; and there stood Johnny, flushed and beaming behind his folding counter, with kerosene flames and one big coffee pot and one big cauldron steaming.

The youngsters lined outside, and often old folks too, when Johnny parked himself beside the pool hall or the movie house. We relished the sauce and beans which Johnny served: only fifteen cents, and crackers free. Once I saw Benjy Davis eat six bowls.

Well, Johnny died, and no one ran a Chili Chariot any longer. Benjy Davis, married fast to Camden now, remarked on this one evening when the three of us were strolling with our purchases, and that was all he ever needed to say.

Camden worked and tussled, soaking dried red beans, and cutting beef, and hunting round for peppers. She brought her samples to her mother-in-law and to Spring Davis, too, and to our family, that we might taste and criticize. "More beans," some people said, and, "Chop the beef a little finer." So she labored, laughing in her secrecy, until she had it right—the way that Johnny Zacharias had made it.

Not until then did she invite us by word-of-mouth to a chili supper; no one was to breathe a word to Benjy, because it was his birthday on this date. I shan't forget the boyish laugh of his strong mouth nor all the silver sparkle in his eyes, when he was led to stand before that wide-spread table and see those mounds of mashed

potatoes, and smell the odor of the choice delicacy which his wife had recreated.

"I hope," she said quite softly, "that it's just like you used to eat."

He tasted cautiously, he spoke one word. "Better," he said, and how that chili disappeared.

Some folks would have us sourly believe that satisfactory marriages are built of sanctimony and nose-on-the-grindstone. I'll testify that violets and chili wove the fabric of this happy matrimony . . . the young folks' glances shafted back and forth, their love frothed high in trivial enterprise as well as in a stalwart passion.

Camden owned a ukulele; her singing voice was only fair, no matter how we loved to hear her speak; when she sang, her tunes were faulty. But not to Benjy's ears.

One night I worked with Benjy by the barn, helping him bolt a dog-box on a truck. Suddenly I saw that he was rigid, listening, and from the darkened porch (then being wide rebuilt, beyond a heap of shavings and sawbucks standing) we heard the flat soft song which Camden made.

He whispered, "She bought that ukulele when she was a little kid."

The melody rose thin and wavery but it had a hauntingness. Benjy crossed the yard halfway, to stand in gloom and call to her, "Camden. Sing that one you sang the other night."

"'Nita, Juanita?'" I heard her querying.

"That's the one."

He strode back, getting busy with the truck once

more, but giving only half an ear and eye. It is probable that more of him was on that half-built porch than worked beside me at the barn. He saw her as she must have looked—so slim and wistful, big-eyed, rosy-haired—a musing child, sunk down on that old hammock, and whispering the chorus in a kind of wail.

“Ask thy soul
If we should part—”

She didn't need to ask his soul or hers; they didn't want to part. But still be it remembered that each of these young people was possessed of hidden bitterness which previous years had hammered in. Each had soft iron of the spirit which could cook to hardness at a word or deed.

Newcomers to our region, maybe visiting relatives over Sunday, and singing “I Love to Tell the Story” with natives at our church, and setting out amid green grass in rockers in the afternoon when meat loaf and creamed potatoes and wilted lettuce had been disposed of—newcomers heard queer mention of the Davises; they would hear hound dog names, and mention of a murder; and they would wonder how such a union ever came to be made, between the dark Benjy and the dainty Camden.

“It was a match made by a 30-30 rifle,” my father Cal Royster might say.

My mother would cry hush. “It was a match made up in heaven,” she'd declare, and since I held more or

less the same opinion, a burden of explanation fell on me.

In the beginning of his ancient days our tall neighbor Spring Davis reared a little gyp from out a legend. More fabulous in limb and power and in wisdom than any fox-hound ever tracing through those hills, his Bugle Ann possessed a voice of sheerest melody. She was the talk and toast of men on every ridge, and how they envied Spring his prize.

Then in moved Jacob Terry, occupying an abandoned farm where once his in-laws dwelt, and putting snag-toothed bands of fencing through the woods. He was a large and surly man, unliked by most: but his daughter Camden was neat-patterned from her dead mother's bolt of goods: a Camden through and through, aloof and dignified, except for red hair which the Terry strain awarded.

And Benjy Davis, right next door, got fairly on his knees in worship. Secretly he designated Camden Terry as his own, and she gave back to him her shy devotion. Then came an evening when she and Benjy drove to see the moving pictures; when they returned, the feud and trouble stood on high, with tall black smoke and angry heat inside.

Bugle Ann had disappeared beyond Jake Terry's barricade of wire fence. She wouldn't answer to the Davis horn, and all of us went searching. Terry appeared with shotgun handy, and he cursed us wild, and ordered us to leave his land. He swore that he'd slay any hound which stepped upon his grass.

"Jacob," said old Spring, or words to that effect, "if you kill Bugle Ann, I'll blow you clean to glory."

I reckon Terry doubted him, and never feared. He went back to his house, reviling all—and, worse than that—reviling his own daughter when he found her home.

"You've been out with that snaky Davis boy again," he roared. "I tell you now, you'll never go again! Nor ever speak a word to him, nor let him even glance at you."

Eighteen years old and tender as she was, young Camden had the spunk of soldiers and of judges in her veins. "You have no right to put such laws on me. I'll go with Benjy Davis any time he asks me." So her father slapped her on the mouth.

That was enough. She took her clothes and packed them in the car which was her own; and Jacob Terry never dared to strike her more—not when he saw the last sharp arrows of the glance she turned on him.

She started out in speed, and just beyond the Terry gate her right wheel tossed the shape of Bugle Ann aside. The tired gyp, unharmed by Terry but full exhausted from her hours of seeking after a far-run fox, was trotting on the road to home when she was struck.

She wasn't killed; she cried in agony just once, and then she fell to moaning. Camden Terry picked her up. "I knew that there'd been trouble," she explained, long afterward. "If it were known that I'd hurt Bugle Ann, I feared worse trouble might occur."

Accordingly she conveyed the injured hound far up

to Jackson County where an uncle lived, and told that she had found some nameless dog run over in the road when she was driving there. But the tragedy which Camden hoped to forestall never had been stayed.

Bright and early in the morning Springfield Davis trailed abroad, his rifle in his hand, and neighbors following; and voices warned against the course he contemplated. Bugle Ann's small tracks were found, a-leading to that gate and never going past it. It looked as if Jake Terry'd slain her with an ax, as he had threatened.

Terry appeared, his weapon ready, but old Springfield Davis fired first. Thus we had a murder trial, the first in years; and thus our worthy neighbor went away to serve his time behind the prison walls, at eighty-two. Terry was dead, and Bugle Ann was surely dead as well, to all of us; for Camden never told the whole. She believed in sincerity that matters would have gone far worse for Springfield Davis if she'd spoke her piece, and jurors perceived that Bugle Ann had never been destroyed.

In withdrawal and in solitude, Camden bred that pretty half-lame gyp to a good dog named Proctor Pride, and one of the pups betokened that she owned all of her dam's endearments and her skill. Bugle Ann did not remain for long to see this patterning; she waited till the pups were weaned, and then she lit for home. She'd pined so thin, a-dreaming of her native thickets. I reckon that she pined for Springfield Davis too.

One night we started from our beds. We heard her voice, and knew it for a chant of ghostliness. Remember, we had never known that Bugle Ann still lived. She bayed that night with honey sounds, and how the rumors ripped around, though she was never seen again within the flesh. I found her bones myself, with her own home-made collar hanging close—found them beneath a scroll of rusty wire where she'd choked herself, and Benjy Davis buried her relics underneath a sweet-crab tree.

Next June, old Springfield Davis won a pardon, instigated by the act of Camden Terry; for her mother's folks were active in the Government, and what she said and what they said bore solid weight. Not ever realizing that the daughter of the man he'd shot had now unlocked his prison door, the veteran stood within his own dooryard at last. We celebrated hard, and then we went to run our dogs, because the night was sticky and demanded it. Our souls demanded, just as strong.

Deep distant in those trees a voice besought our ears. The voice of Bugle Ann, we all believed—and yet so sure that we were crazy, and sure that folks would shrink from us, and banish us because we'd heard a ghost. Not till we found another fire in the timberland on Heaven Hump, and Camden Terry waiting there, did we discern the truth. We'd heard the voice of Bugle Ann's own pup.

Her name was Little Lady, and she owned a prime clear note, the smooth blast of a metal horn, which had

kept the whole community in admiration years before. She could handle a fox more than fairly. So, at last, come home to Heaven Creek where rightfully she belonged, Little Lady could go tonguing brilliantly, with other hounds in cry. She was spotted much the same as Bugle Ann.

She brought a power of happiness into the later days of Springfield Davis. For a well-loved dog is a gift from the Creator, whether it ran in this same century or in the years of Daniel Boone, or far earlier than that—when the hounds and the wild men first started living together, away off back somewhere.

OUR DOGS RUSTLED out a fox, south and east beyond all hearing, running like they were tied to him. It was eleven o'clock at night, middling damp and black-dark, for the young moon had already gone to hide.

We squatted on the west slope of the Divide above Heaven Creek—the usual four of us, armed with boiled eggs and onion sandwiches, and we carried along a water jug, and my father had a half-a-pint of whiskey. Our trucks were under the oaks, just far enough back for firelight to pretend that radiator caps were precious gems. The spooky places among big trees were full of betty-millers and numerous other moths, and beetles were a-buzzing.

But it seemed as if the timberland considered itself incomplete, without voices of hounds splitting themselves upon the shagbarks; and so all life was waiting and summoning—acorn and pecking coon and noxious flytrap weeds beside the creek—urging that the pack return and make dutiful music in the background.

Benjy Davis pulled his thin brown face away from the fire: the blaze was good to watch but hard to sit by. He said to all and sundry, "She's just about coming in."

We knew without his saying that he made mention of Little Lady.

"Yes," said Benjy, agreeing with himself. "From all signs, this should be the last time I run her till she's clean out of season."

Springfield Davis moved his jaws around the usual rich wad of chewing tobacco. "Now, I was over to the Maitland place, week before last. Young Lee Maitland took me there in his car to see Flying Bobby Ford."

"If Little Lady belonged to me," spoke up my father, Cal Royster, "I would of had me a couple of litters out of her before this."

Benjy spoke short. "Little Lady doesn't belong to you."

Pa took out his flask, and squinted against the flame to see how many swallows were there and how long they'd do him. "The greatest fox-hound in captivity, the daughter of Bugle Ann, and you've never let her drop a pup!"

"No," spoke Spring Davis's calm old voice. "She belongs to Camden. And Benjy."

"She belongs to you, Pa. Camden presented her, right in these woods."

"Oh," said Spring, "just call her a Davis dog."

Indeed it was share and share with those fine neighbors of ours nowadays. After Spring was pardoned, and after Little Lady was escorted mysteriously to run on the same extensive ranges where her mother's voice had spoken—and after Camden Terry and Benjy had been wed, right there on the Davis porch beneath an arch of wild phlox the Armstrong daughters manufactured—after these great events took place, there had to be a new arrangement for living.

It worked to advantage. Benjy and Camden toiled for weeks previous to their marriage, fixing up the old Terry place as a cottage for themselves and their future family if ever they would own one. Benjy had money in the bank, and he employed a Wolf Center carpenter and plumber, and he and Camden painted outside and in.

About that time big Gabe Strickland got weary of attending so many prayer-services at the Armstrong place where he had served as hired man. He said morning prayers were enough and plenty, or evening prayers, but not both; and he stamped away with his valise and guitar-case, and offered himself to the Davises.

This was a sane solution: Gabe slept on a cot in the machine shed until the wedding ceremony, and then he moved up into Benjy's former room. With the Camden Terry acres now ready for mutual cultivation along

with Davis land, it took the best efforts of two able-bodied men. Spring could perform only the lightest of chores in his antiquity, and through brief periods Benjy even had to hire extra help.

The fate of farmers had improved. Prices went up, and there were Government checks, and electricity brought down into our region on high lines. We sported trucks and telephones and such-like, where in many cases we hadn't experienced them before; and my mother loved the radio, and kept it going on a shelf above her dishpans. But though we had all grown modern and prosperous, we still loved to hunt our dogs, and did so as much as was morally possible. Sometimes it seemed that we were even immorally neglectful of other matters, when foxes smelled sweet and the first lovely squawl tuned up on the jump.

Spring liked to keep his fine stock close to hand, so only Little Lady dwelt with Benjy and Camden. That was fitting, for Camden had reared her from the first. But Spring went a-calling over there whenever the spirit moved him, and that was frequently. He sat often on the canvas porch-swing with the pink nose of this fabulous animal pushed against his trouser-leg. Just call her a Davis dog.

These knowledges and understandings prevailed in my mind on this night; I studied them and found them good.

Then came a clarion echo, like the love-song of some savage ghost who paced across the wooded miles all dressed in deerskins and his eagle feathers.

It was a baying which commanded over all the insects, and Benjy and I heard it first because our ears were younger.

"She's in front again." He spoke without exasperating pride, but just as if he'd said the world was round.

"That's a good chop, right up there with her," and I was taking note of our own Vinegar Blink, who was keenly close on the fox, even if he couldn't sing like Kate Smith or someone else.

My father took a next-to-the-last sample of his whiskey. "I'll testify to God," he said. "They do pack well, Spring. Our'n and your'n."

Spring Davis smiled under his mustache and touched his fingers on the bugle-lip. "They always have, Cal."

Owk, owk, owk. We Roysters bred for push and drive and speed; we didn't care for bench, nor how the judges graded up some sorry potlicker who looked like hell on wheels because of his back or stifles or the firmness of his toes, but who couldn't stay with a fox if the fox only had three feet and corns on one of those.

I stood and snapped my fingers in pleasure, and counted out the names of those we owned, and Benjy named the Davises. Old Spring just leaned against a black oak trunk, and crushed a sandwich in his long claw hand. His ears were hearing only one good trumpet over all the clacking.

He said, "There never lived a voice like that in any time or nation. Excepting one."

My father took a final swallow from his flask, and screwed the top back on; he tossed it in the flames.

And pretty soon the flask would burst like any bomb, and then we all would dodge, and laugh; and Spring would shake his head, and ask my Pa how soon he'd grow up, anyway.

Pa said, "You'd have some other mouths as good. With luck you'd get a one or two, in any litter that you bred."

"Take this stud dog at the Maitland place," Spring told us. "He's sired champions."

"And bubble-babblers-bumblebees as well," his son reproved. "Did you glimpse those two-year-olds the Lanceys tried to run of late? I swear they didn't know if they was crying fox or polecat or the morning news. And they're by Flying Bobby Henry Ford, or what the hell they call him."

Springfield sighed, and ate the last remainders of his sandwich. "That's the rub," his foggy voice declared. "We can't agree. I guess we'll breed her, but—"

"Well, she ain't ready to be introduced to anyone tonight," my father said. "Now, Bake, just set and listen to the tune." And there I was, not saying anything.

Just marveling at it all. For we were happy; and strange it was to reason that such pleasantness could ever have emerged from all the cruelties which lay on us before—especially upon the Davises. Old Spring had slain a neighbor for Bugle Ann's own sake, and faced his penalty without a murmur; but still the daughter of that murdered man had been the key to open up his jail-house door.

So we were joyful, though never speaking much about it. We had no inkling of the fury to come.

Spring talked about this breeding business, when the fox trail swept off distantly again and took the voices from our ears. Sometimes he felt a mood to tell fine stories of the days agone: the war he'd known when he was beardless, and feuds and fightings, and the bushwhack days. How he was wounded at Pea Ridge, and people held him down to probe the bullet from his thigh. He had the bullet yet; it weighed an ounce, and he'd let children hold the lead, but never let them use it for a marble, though they prayed to frequently.

On this night he talked about great fox-hounds of the past—how tall they bred them then, and how they holed a panther till the menfolks smoked it out. He spoke of Triple Trouble, Triple Choke and Buck-and-Ball—the long-eared dogs my grandfather had owned—and how, if they were living in this age, he'd admire to bring one of them to Little Lady.

Benjy spoke his share. They chewed it back and forth; they never could agree. Not Flying Bobby Henry Ford, said Benjy, or any other Maitland which he knew. The Lanceys owned some good producers, and two of them were ready for the stud; but Spring just snorted loud; he prophesied their faults.

It was half an hour later when the fox holed, over in the Bachelor's timber, and we brought the hounds in and put them in their boxes. Once more the Davis bugle came to play; that was the summons Little Lady

answered to, as had her mother before her. We doused the fire and prepared to go. I thought of how we'd sat pretty close to that same spot in 1931, and explained to some stranger about how we worked this enterprise, and how our dogs enjoyed it too: a race, with no intent to kill. Indeed we cherished all our foxes.

But when at last the Davises had gone their way, and we'd gone ours, and put the dogs to bed, I knew restlessness. Pa was snoring down the hall (so was my mother, just a little bit, though continually she denied it) and I lay there and looked out through my screen. All I could see was the rim of timber and the black sky above, like a blackboard in a schoolhouse, and no stars. But a phantom pack kept tonguing, or so it seemed.

Such a sound would be retained by cottonwoods and elder brush, and by the hickory trees on higher ground, and butternuts. The staunch chop which our Royster dogs emitted, the long trailing note of mixed-up Davises, and up above the clearness of music played by Little Lady. It was something to consider: the whole wide universe was like a timbered pasture with hounds a-coming through.

But, like I've said, we did not know the panic approaching soon, nor the gall to follow. So eagerly I listened to an echo of the dogs throughout whatever dreams occurred.

CAMDEN DAVIS—she that was a Terry—came by our place about ten o'clock the next morning. This was August, with the corn beyond any necessity for combing it; our small grain was cut; there was some piddling work to do in our big garden patch, but I got a dose of energy and cleaned the stable out instead.

There I stood, fork in my hands, and nigh up to my knees in straw and other stuff, when Camden drove her way down the lane. I felt a mite embarrassed, dirty as I was; she always looked so clean and like a little girl, and fresh. She had the ruddy hair of Terry folks but there resemblance stopped; her face and eyes and

mouth were made for quality and gentleness, like all the Camden tribe.

“Just wondered,” she cried, “whether your mother had any trading I could do for her in town?”

I hid behind a wagon, for my shirt was off. “Don’t know. You better get out and go in and ask her. You going to Wolf Center?”

She shut off the engine and stepped to the ground, slim and dainty and graceful. I envied Benjy Davis, and so might any man. She gave a giggle as she turned toward the house. “Main purpose of my errand is to get some extra chicken wire. He’s eking out that old pen on the slope, and resetting the posts.”

So that was where he would retire Little Lady to, this trip. Earlier they used to pen her at the Davises’, and that made for hullabaloo, with other hounds around.

“It’s a good place, Camden,” I agreed. “Ground slopes enough so any rain will clean the place out properly. I don’t trust these dog-runs on the bottom land. They’re germ-collectors and distemper-breeders.”

She nodded, and went to speak to Ma, who only wanted blue yarn and some arnica. We always did that, back and forth, when anyone was driving in to town: it saved a lot of fuss and gas.

Meanwhile I went on with my work, and grimly realized what pen we were discussing. It was a chicken house and chicken pen originally, although the chickens were always getting out; but Camden didn’t keep a hen, and I was just as glad. She and Benjy

toted eggs from the Davises', and fryers when they wanted them, or guinea fowl.

The day when old Spring Davis put his bullet through Camden's father, there were some young chickens skittering around, and when Jake Terry fell he fell on one and pressed it flat. I never could abide to mess with chicks from that day forth; I reckon Benjy couldn't either, though he never mentioned it.

It was interesting to think that a fox-hound would occupy that hillside space, for all the years of sun and rain and winter had certainly exterminated any germs. And Little Lady occupied it soon enough.

I was past their place, a few days after, and Benjy showed the structure off with pride. Little Lady stood within the mesh, and tried to signal me how glad she was to see a friend.

"You approached any decision yet?" I asked of Benjy.

He shook his head. "Tried to interest Pa in the Lancey idea again, but no good luck. That big Champ Clark of theirs is always out in front; he'll run a fox until it walks; but Pa says that he's got a parrot-jaw."

A few days more, and Little Lady had a visitor.

Just where this particular suitor came from, nobody ever knew. But he was there when Camden looked out early one afternoon. He was sitting just outside the pen, looking in at Little Lady, and she lay there solemn with her nose squeezing the grass, and let him look.

Camden didn't recognize this creature as belonging to any farm in the neighborhood, and no wonder. In

our immediate neck of the woods the scales were tipped heavily in favor of fox-hounds: the Davises and we Roysters and the Armstrongs owned nothing else. My young brother Del was married to a Lancey girl (so was my brother Tom) and she had always held a notion about cockers, so they bought a cocker for their kids to play with, all kisses and slobbers.

Uncle Punch Lancey possessed a collie dog not quite as old as himself, but striving to be, which used to fetch the cows all the way home from Heaven Creek whenever you asked him to—and frequently even when you didn't.

This new character come a-calling on Little Lady had no inkling of the cocker or collie or old-Rover-Shep-native-Grandpa-Missouri-farm-dog about him. Looked as if he had started out to be a hound and then decided to be an Airedale as an afterthought. His face was spiny as an acre of brown burdock; his eyes were glass; he looked pauperish and used up—a kind of tramp and gypsy who had no moral scruples so far as other people's chickens were concerned. Or other people's ladies, big or Little.

Camden went out and said Shoo, get away. She said Scat, and made as if to pick up a rock and heave it at him; so obligingly he got out of the way, but not as if he believed it was a real rock she was throwing. It would take more than the hurling of imaginary stones to discourage this tattered hoodlum, and Camden reckoned that most folks would have started thinking in traditional terms of shotguns and rock salt.

The sun shone pleasantly all along the ridge, and it found tossed corn in a field stretching over toward the Davis place. Though nobody was there to see, except the penned-up gyp and the vagabond laying suit to her, the sun must have discovered Camden's hair and made a willow-red of it. I know: I've seen it that way many's the time, and have seen the look on Benjy Davis's face when he watched her.

"You go away," ordered the young woman in her little-girl voice, and she pretended to find another imaginary bullet to let fly at him. So the hairy-faced coot trotted off another few yards, and then he turned and observed, and sat down calmly on his haunches. He sat with fuzzy face directed square at Little Lady; he gave Camden Davis no more heed, though she played at throwing further stones, and actually did sling a handful of gravel which went wide of the mark.

Then down she strolled, all the way to the pen, and petted Little Lady through the fence, calling her baby names as women will; I reckon Little Lady liked that part well enough. But now and again the hound would twist her neck away from Camden's hands. Ears and deep wide eyes and famous muzzle and all, she would turn to gaze at that stickery old wretch a-squatting in the sun.

It was as if she knew that in him dwelt a power more compelling than the happiest endearments of her mistress. It was the same strength which gave the corn blades their gleam, and made the earth smoke as it put its force upward into the tall tough stalks.

"You wouldn't have anything to do with some rapscallion like that, would you, honey?" said Camden. And then, building an answer which was certainly unfair to Little Lady's fervent inclinations: "No, of course you wouldn't. You're fine and special. You're by Proctor Pride out of Bugle Ann. You're the one like *her*," and so she proceeded, as she confessed afterward, uttering scornful things about that shaggy heathen, and fabricating more denials than even the most confirmed old maid among fox-hounds would have desired to speak.

No neighbors stopped by during the afternoon, and Benjy himself did not appear until it was time for the evening chores. One of the Pettigrews had lain sick for a month, so everybody was over there, pitching in on the threshing.

Camden heard the sound of Benjy's car; she ran out to kiss him, ready to help with milking and feed, and bragging about the guinea hen she was fixing to give him for supper.

"How's Little Lady?" he wanted to know, first off.

Camden couldn't help but giggle, though it did seem cruel. "She's not happy in that chicken pen."

"Happy or not, there she stays," said Benjy Davis. "If we don't make up our minds about breeding her this trip, it's just her hard luck."

Camden told him about the gentleman caller, if such an elegant term could be used, and Benjy started off toward the chicken-run with speed.

"Oh, Benjy. He won't hurt her. That wire's tough enough; he can't get to her."

Benjy glowered over his shoulder. "Naturally he wouldn't hurt her. But I don't want him hanging around. I mistrust all the hounds in this county holding a convention here. Which one is he? You didn't say."

"Course I didn't, hon. I don't know. He's bushy in the face. Looks something like Whiskey Wilson, down in front of the pool hall at Wolf Center."

Benjy said with decision, "If folks can't keep their dogs to home, brushy-faced or not, they're going to get a good switching," and he broke off a whip from the lilacs. He went striding away through long shadows, peeling leaves free as he went. Well enough he knew how strong the chicken wire was, for he had tested it. But he didn't like to have stray or nameless critters breathing the same air which Little Lady breathed.

That mutt-skinned hound never lingered to be switched. He hiked away, showing more speed than Benjy could have guessed. He ran clean across the run which puddled the slope below the barnyard, and then in usual fashion he sat down and stared with his glass eyes.

Benjy threw a few rocks; all came close, none struck. He hoped that would be proper warning, and hastened up to his chores so Camden wouldn't feel obliged to undertake the heavy work. Benjy figured that women-folks had enough to do in their houses, and it galled him to imagine Camden handling a pitchfork; his own

mother had had to do that often enough when he and his father got overly engaged with the dogs. He was ashamed of certain things in the past, and swore he'd never make those selfish errors his father had made, however much he worshipped Springfield Davis.

So did we all.

When Camden and Benjy came back together, to feed Little Lady and change her water, and baby her awhile, there was that same hairy savage just outside the wire, fairly begging for rudest punishment. Again the running feet and yells and stones being flung; one must have hit the wretch this time, for he gave a yip, and Camden pressed her hand against her mouth.

She cried, "Oh, Benjy!"

"Plague that buzzard."

"But you oughtn't to really hurt him."

"I've got to hurt him to make him stay clear of her. Suppose he managed to sneak under that wire when our backs were turned? My pa would never forgive us; I swear he'd never speak a word to us again. If—" He shook his head and said no more.

Then later they went in moonlight to take Little Lady for a walk, and she frisked at the end of a piece of clothesline which Camden held wrapped around her own wrist. Benjy was taking no chances; he kept his switch handy. Every so often he'd say, "Wait," or "Hold on a minute," and all three of them would stop and stand, looking out across those hills which seemed to have melted and spooned together in the mist.

Surely they had a Presence following on. He danced

well out of range of Benjy's switch or any stones which could be slung, and mostly out of their combined sight too. Far up the creek some of us were out with our dogs—myself and my father, Cal Royster, and maybe a Lancey or two, on that same night. The hounds were driving a fox south of the Bachelor's timber, and it was hell to tell the boss.

Once Little Lady swung her muzzle high, and seemed about to give fair voice in answer. But good custom ruled: she was no babbler, nor came from any cheap line. Therefore she lowered her nose again and uttered a kind of sigh, and that was all. She'd never give voice to a fox which other hounds were working; it had to be her own quarry if she was to tongue it.

"Jackie Cooper," said Benjy. "Reckon that's him out ahead. I think higher of that dog than when he was younger. His voice is only an Armstrong voice—no real sense or value to it—but he's always in front. If her blood could furnish the bugle voice—"

"You said—" Camden cut in, sharp above the night rustle of frogs and peepers. "I heard you tell your father, plain and straight, that you'd never mingle Armstrong blood with hers."

Benjy said, "There's Top Soak." (That was one of mine at the time; sold him later to a man from Oklahoma, and he seeded out some of the best pups in that section.) "He don't know quit or miss. He's a powerful driver, and never runs the road. If I made the right kind of deal with Bake Royster—but maybe Bake would want the pick of the litter—"

I wouldn't have demanded it, but he never asked me.

"I heard Springfield Davis declare," cried Camden in wonder, "that he'd considered every Royster dog in his mind. He was reluctant, but he said he didn't want to try any of them, for one reason or another. He was dead set in his soul, the way old people get."

For all this discussion about dogs of the region, and their breeding chances if associated with Little Lady, the fox-hound herself gave no heed. Times she'd lift her ears slightly, and gaze into creeping shadows where the mist lay like flat white rivers above each low place. She knew that that unkempt stranger with the broom-stubble face was lurking nigh; her nose told her. If dogs do make up their minds I guess hers was made up before this, and she must have concluded she would bide her time.

The young Davises came at last from the walk, and they were yawning, and scarcely raising eyes any more to the cream and beauty all around. But a far-rooted desire of mating time was magic in that season; so peculiar it was, to feel that the hardness of whirling stars and planets was represented in the yearnings of one persistent old stray, and in the quiet willingness which Little Lady awarded him.

Both Camden and Benjy were thinking, sleepily and separately, about other violences which had ruled the land they were treading. Here they were, returned to their dooryard which once had been Jacob Terry's dooryard. Here (their feet pressed the very spot) was

where Spring Davis had stood when he lifted his 30-30 and shot Camden's own father to the death.

Off past the barn and pens rose a smudge of forest where Terry had set his wire fencing which inaugurated all the strain and misery. And far over in higher secrecy beyond the fog still existed a few scraps of the Bachelor's cabin. There Bugle Ann had gone leaping to her final doom amid wire, and Benjy Davis himself had caressed her collar and gathered her little bones.

They heard the distant racing of neighbor dogs; they closeted Little Lady securely, and went to their rest—sleeping close, I would guess, as people do when they're in love. But still that spiny reprobate clung, to speak in silence his eagerness toward the creature whom he courted—to lie near, persuading and promising and tempting her—as if she needed promise or the barest temptation. For he had a well-set vigor about him; its beginning lay way yonder in the choke of katydids. He was lingering to hand again when the sun came fresh.

WHERE HE ATE or slept, no one ever knew, or even whether he ate or slept. Like people in the Scriptures who dwelt in desert places, there may have been honey and locusts figuring in his diet. Camden spoke of him as *Bristles*, for he was aflower with them; but no prince of fairy legend ever kept a truer vigil.

And he had gall, because when other dogs approached he would rise and shine his teeth and build wicked sounds within his throat that bespoke his claim to Little Lady's graces. Some of the local hounds did get loose and scamper toward the Terry farm, as most of us still called it. Old Bristles handled every one.

Toul Sector there was, an ancient pensioner of my own, who could mingle behind a fox fast and well if he was properly escorted, but who had run as many miles upon his own trail, giving full voice the while, as he had on any varmint's. He seemed to forget the rheumatics of the elderly which now possessed him; he trotted fresh and willing through the fields when some peculiar grapevine summons concerning Little Lady reached him.

Old Bristles dove out of the currant bushes where he had been a-guarding, and in short order Toul Sector was headed homewards on three legs, loudly advising every younger hound between Lost Run and the Indian River to keep away from that particular hillside.

Later there came Five Point Nine and Saint Nazaire, both from our bunch; and it was told that J. N. Garner eluded the watchfulness of Spring Davis and made the pilgrimage he felt compelled to make.

Then the Armstrongs. Names of the Armstrong dogs reflected the inclination of old Ed, who was an ardent shouter down at the Nazarene Church, and of his sons. One boy was the undisputed call-shot champion at the pool parlor, and the other bought movie magazines every week and tried to talk like Jimmy Cagney.

Thus Ephesian and Willie Hoppe and King Herod and Marion Davies all patted the dust of the Armstrong place off their paws, one time or another, and made the same visit with the identical high intention.

Bristles was steady on the job, discouraging these unbidden guests with violent use of his jaws. Seemed

like there was a kind of shuttle running, with a parade of fox-hounds venturing nigh, their tails twitching and interested; and another parade journeying away over the pasture, but speedier, and giving more agonized remarks than they had made a-coming.

"You ought to quit throwing rocks," cried Camden to her husband, in indignation. "You ought to quit breathing fire and slaughter against that poor fellow. You ought to give him a medal instead."

Benjy grunted. "A mite of dust and sprinkle, with a dose of gunpowder behind it, would go better."

Camden showed pallor as she always showed it when there was mention of guns. The former porch was gone, and a modern one of different dimensions stood constructed in its place; but still she might remember how her father had fallen from the porch with a bullet through him, and the best dishpan knocked off its hook behind.

"Don't you dare to fire on that dog, Benjy Davis."

"Well—"

She looked out now and again, when Benjy was busy in the fields, and observed how Bristles hung outside that chicken wire, making his best manners to Little Lady through the mesh. It was no longer an irk she felt bound to resist—only a sore pity in her heart. Again she would cry to herself, "What a shame! If he was only a pure bred fox-hound—even an Armstrong or a Pettigrew—"

Bristles looked more gaunt and sorry than ever, though Little Lady didn't seem to take offense. Finally

Camden could stand it no longer, with her kindly heart and all. When she saw Bristles weak and close beside the pen, nuzzling an old ear of corn as hard as flint, she was fit to be tied. Water he could get close to hand, but food for stray dogs there was none; and Little Lady had her own pan which Benjy kept fastened far behind the wire.

Camden cooked up a huge mess of corn-meal mush with cracklings liberally within it. She bore out this giant's ration for the appreciation of Bristles, who took and fled when he sensed her coming.

But he was back in no time, smelling in amazement as if he couldn't believe his own true nose; and then he really set to work, with the pretty gyp watching him earnestly from within her jail, and approving with every nod of her ears.

About that time something boiled over on the stove, for Camden was a-canning pickles, and she couldn't watch longer through the window. Thus she forgot about the guilty evidence of that pan.

Benjy himself found it there when he came to inspect Little Lady, sweaty and crusted as he was from the fields.

He stamped dark-angry into the kitchen, never sniffing the good odors of vinegar and mustard seed.

"Did you feed that tramp?"

"What tramp? There hasn't been one near our place in a month of Sundays."

"There's one right now, with bad blood and scandal

about him. You know what I mean. Did you feed that dog?"

Her chin came up, her dainty lip turned harder than the old nubbin Bristles had tried to chew. "I can't bear to see any dumb animal in starvation."

"Let him starve, if he hain't got better sense." The bright kitchen seemed mocking them, with its bridal-shower pots and skillets still looking new. "He could go off and catch a slew of ground-squirrels if he wasn't so stubborn."

Camden whispered, "Hon, I guess he loves her."

"Loves! You talk like—"

"I talk just like you Davises have always talked. Bugle Ann was a person to you—she was better than many a human relation. Your father—" Tears came; Camden could say no more. She went flying upstairs, and that was the first time she ever hooked the door against Benjy.

He ate his supper in ugly silence when the chores were done; he did them sole alone, though ordinarily Camden was prone to help him in light fashion; and they even made fun out of it—singing and calling little jokes while they worked, as young folks do.

At last Benjy's wife came down. Her eyes were raw and flushed, though she had done up her soft hair afresh.

Benjy said, "You better eat some supper."

"I'm not hungry, thanks. Reckon I'll take a glass of milk."

This was their first quarrel since marriage, but it was

an important one, and not done yet by any means. Anything which concerned Little Lady was bound to be impressive. She was the daughter of Bugle Ann, and thus fame and some misery and a certain ghostliness would be her lot.

Well apart Camden and Benjy roosted on the porch, she in the swing and he on the steps. They heard the first hounds of evening beguiling among the higher reaches of Heaven Creek where some of the neighborhood boys were out. The moon was not yet up, and there lived a thick canvas of clouds for it to hang behind when it did appear.

Deep-plunged in soreness and in sourness, Benjy didn't even have the heart to go resisting after that undesirable sentry who without doubt still walked his post outside the pen. Then Little Lady made a sound, such as she always made when the wind brought her knowledge of Springfield Davis. Benjy climbed slow to his feet and went to meet his father.

The old man walked frail in these days, for he was in the high eighties of age, and he carried a strong cane of thick-cut willow to help him on his course. He was nearly tree-tall in the dusk, his shoulders humped and head carried forward. The long white hair beneath his hat seemed to have a frost you could see in the dark.

He came, thin and dusky—just thought he'd take a stroll, he said, the same as always. But both young folks knew, for all their spite, that mainly he had come to see how Little Lady was doing.

"Doing all right," Benjy said, speaking short. "Only

trouble we've got is with a roustabout which Camden encourages to hang around here."

The young woman had come down to stand beside Spring Davis. Her face seemed to glint perilously fair in the gloom.

Springfield looked at them. Elderly as he might be, he could smell a ruckus when one was boiling. "What roustabout are you talking about, Benjy Davis?" he asked with caution.

"He's been here mainly all week. Just a dirty tramp with brush upon his face, which wandered into the neighborhood."

"Dogs like that," said Spring, "they will go a-wandering far, when Nature tells them to."

Benjy said, "Nature had better tell this one to get the hell out of here by tomorrow, or I won't answer for consequences. You want to go down and see her, Pa?"

"Always," Spring said, chuckling slightly with a catch in his voice. Doubtless he was thinking of the fine races Little Lady had run and would run once more, with the inheritance of her angelic bugle cry rising silver behind hilltop fires.

And maybe too he thought of pups which would come to her in time, when a proper mate had been selected; and thus her music would be echoed along a century with other unborn ears to hear it. Even if Springfield Davis himself went to the dust, as he would need to do before long; even if the bones of Little Lady settled in well-dedicated soil where the relics of Bugle Ann had already gone.

The people made their way across the yard and down the slope, with Camden holding tight to the veteran's arm, and Benjy moving fast ahead.

Old Bristles darted off before they got there, and Benjy swore. Spring Davis tried to see the scamp in dimness, though his eyes were weak.

"Never worry," he reassured his son. "You got good, neat, safe, strong quarters for her to stay in."

"Mr. Davis!" Camden spoke beseechingly out of her discomfort. "Can't you menfolks make up your minds and get this thing settled? I call it downright cruel. She should be having pups, and raising them, and playing with and teaching them. She ought to be a mother. She—"

Spring laughed; he gave her ruddy hair a tweak. "Honey, these things take a certain amount of time and decision. Now, yesterday I was heart and soul considering Redwing Master, that the Lanceys brought over here from Hickory County. Bought him off a man named Sappington. He don't seem to have a true fault, and from the looks and actions of some of his pups he's a top producer."

Benjy stood near to shake a head. "No good mouth. I heard him run a-Wednesday."

"I said *yesterday*," his father told him, chiding. "But today I dropped the notion. Children, she's scarce more'n a pup as yet. If we let matters rest for this time, why, maybe during next winter—"

Camden spoke softly. Yet her tender voice had the

edge of a knife coming through this swaddle of darkness which claimed them.

“You kept Bugle Ann waiting for over five years.”

They walked in silence to the house-yard, and Benjy reckoned he'd go a piece with his father on the way home: the ground wasn't wet enough to be slippery, but still there were tricky spots for an aged man to travel. Camden sat where her husband sat before, on the clean wooden steps. She looked up and tried to find the moon. Only its specter hustled slow behind the draping clouds.

Down toward the cage where the gyp was wired in enforced seclusion, there seemed to echo a word or two which human lips might never speak nor human ears understand. That mud-dried mountebank, with burrs against his hide, was lingering anew and snuffing his faith to Little Lady.

Camden figured that Benjy, somber as he was, would actually shoot that critter on the next day. She squeezed her own hands until they hurt. She tried once more to see the reflection of the moon, and couldn't.

HENRY PETTIGREW got a fearful coughing attack at five o'clock in the morning, and within another hour he was dead of the malady which had weakened him so long.

In a region such as ours, where people had been thoughtful of each other's needs since the first trees were blazed, that made for busy calls upon the telephone. People were lifting their receivers and listening and talking all along the line.

Camden and Benjy prepared to leave home as early as they might, when their own morning tasks were hastily done up. Sad plans for the funeral must be made,

and comfort offered. There must be the gathering of relations from distant points; five small Pettigrews needed to be looked after as well.

Camden it was who gave Little Lady her breakfast on that fateful morning; in Benjy's estimation she took an uncommonly long time doing it. He had put on clean overalls and was ready with the car, backing it out of the corncrib driveway where they kept it, when Camden joined him.

He looked at her coldly. "You spent quite a while."

"I fed her," said Camden.

"Did you feed him again, too?"

She wanted to cry, "None of your business if I did!" but she was softened by distress, thinking of Amy Leah Pettigrew and how round-shouldered and straggle-haired she always looked.

Camden maintained politeness, merely nodding in answer to the question.

Benjy spoke low in his throat. "Thought I made it apparent that I didn't want him fed."

"Thought I made it apparent that I don't allow any stray animal to die of starvation on my place," and there was a jab in that, too: the Terry place was rightfully Camden's own, and had belonged to her ancestors before her.

So they drove, stiff and unhappy. This was unpleasantly bad in Benjy's case, for he was the sort whose rages built to high temperature when blanketed like red coals in the ashes of his silence.

"Blood is blood," he said presently, fairly clipping the

words by their tails. "I thought you appreciated Little Lady, and what she's meant to us and the world, and what she might mean in future times if— I see now I must have been mistook."

Camden turned one slim shoulder toward him, and soon he knew from the motion of her body that she was crying, and yet never making a sound. Somewhere inside himself (he said long afterward) there were the tiny voices of decency and affection, declaring how he had offended all truth.

Camden Terry had been a handmaiden to the Almighty, some years before: she it was who bred Bugle Ann to Proctor Pride, and watched over the litter. She fed and tended Little Lady and the common pups, when their mother was ailing, in solitary nights when Spring Davis was in the Pen, when Benjy was a good five counties distant. She treasured Little Lady before we ever knew that the voice of Bugle Ann—a famous echo in the soul and body of one saddle-backed puppy—would sound once more along the gullies of Heaven Creek.

Maybe it was the restrained quietness of her weeping which enraged Benjy Davis still further, and sent him on and on into an ugly forest of contention. Pretty soon he was piling mean words behind him like logs which he could never climb back over.

"Harboring a cur like that! Saying that maybe she loves him! Ah—"

For more reasons than one, Camden was nervous

as a cat on this morning. She screamed to him to stop, to say no more.

"All right. Just this: I truly believe if you had your way, you'd put the two of them together."

"I would," she cried. "You're right. I would!"

"I'll make certain that you never get your way," said Benjy. He locked his jaws shut until the car turned in at the Pettigrew yard and he was compelled to speak to folks who came trooping sadly.

The young Davises served their neighborly stint in that house of bereavement, maybe for an hour or so. Other men were already looking after things on the place which needed to be seen to; and there were perhaps too many well-intentioned women crowding the porch and kitchen for the widow's peace of mind.

It was agreed that Benjy should take the Pettigrew car and drive over to Buttonball, a good forty miles, to fetch Amy Leah's parents, who were elderly and unable to transport themselves but whose presence was earnestly desired.

So Camden drove for home by herself, with lips set tight. She was trying all the while to wipe from memory the awfulness of her conflict with her man. She sought to bandage every wound by consideration of Nature's kindness; she strove to remember it was a blessing that their poor sick neighbor had found rest at last, and would never more lie feeble and consumptive.

But it was impossible for her to do, remembering that her slight hands were holding now the wheel

which Benjy had held when he spoke that bitterness aloud. Purple vervain in hillside pastures were the same fatal weeds they had gone past earlier, no matter how the sunlight came to dress them, no matter how golden the wild canaries flew.

Here was the bridge. Planks rattled deep beneath the car, and shaggy timbers of Lancey's old mill were tumbled just beyond, with snags of black walnut sticking up to mark the ancient dam. Shiners might glint beneath the easy brownness of the stream; a dusty smell of roadside tangles might rise like musk; and Camden witnessed laughter of three boys who worked and talked, a-stripping sugar cane. But her heart lay unascending and cold.

And worse and worse, as she approached her farm, for there were hooks of trouble and tragedy reaching out to snatch her. It was a thing folks have described in books (and long before that, people whispered such remembrances around the fires at night, and thus sent children quaking and bug-eyed to bed). It was the business of knowing a calamity before you've seen the facts—and still not knowing; of smelling a tribulation in the very wind of night or day—and yet having its scent dissolve in common smells of fresh-cut grain.

Therefore she drove wildly, all caution gone, the car jouncing furious over washboards in the road, and skidding its rear end in high white dust when she made the final turn.

Camden set foot at last within her yard, the house empty and shaded beyond, an old sow muttering com-

fortably to her young in a lot beside the barn. But Camden stood with hands clamped against her pretty head, and then she started to run. She must have run clumsily, as women do for all their grace, catching linen skirts above her knees, skating on the long bent grass which pressed all over the slope.

"Little Lady!" she called, eagerly trying to reassure herself as she scampered. "Hello, Honey! I've been—" But from afar she could see that wired gate a-drifting open, she could hear it whine as the light breeze took it idly shut and opened it again.

Camden Davis prayed as she had never prayed in years; but solely the faint jangle of a loose-swung hook came to touch her hearing. The pen was empty, sure enough. Only the Almighty, gazing down in whimsy against the small affairs of men and hounds, might be able to tell just how this thing had come about. One hook, one staple and one flange: ordinary contrivances, used every day and every hour. Yet in their silent presence there dwelt now the same riddle which had ruled the evening hours before, when Camden couldn't even find a moon to reassure her.

No Little Lady, proud and slim behind the chicken wire. No rugged-haired old Bristles, snorting and wagging out of range of rocks, and streaking off when you threatened him. The gate turned lazy, open and loose. How and why had she done this thing?

Oh, she could have sworn upon a stack of Bibles that the fastening was made full well—the hook sunk deep within its proper staple. But all the upset in her soul,

and thinking of the Pettigrews, and mad and worried by Benjy's orneriness; and then she hastened with the pans in hand, the little breakfast for the gyp, the bigger bait for that old rascal with the stickery face—

Somehow she'd managed it, with no defiance or intent. And now the pen stood free of any occupant, with only one slow-moving velvet butterfly to drift above the wire, and wag its wings across a truant wind, and then lift high—take speed for uplands and the miles of brush beyond, where those lovelorn dogs had fled away.

She ran to the house to get her bugle. All the way she felt how dry and hot her eyes were burning, though wet tears stung her spirit underneath. *A little boy?* she thought. *Could some neighbor have come and—?* But in all that region dwelt no person, tall or little, who would have done this trick for devilment.

Still Camden hastened back to the empty pen once more, where there was barren ground before the gate—the sod turned over into mud or dust as rains or hard-baking sunlight might determine. There'd been a sprinkle in the night, and so all tracks were plain to see: the big toe-pads of Bristles mostly, and those few dancing marks Little Lady had left when she galloped to her freedom.

Camden's own traces appeared, going and coming, and going and coming again—the small print of her heels typed into soil where some time previous the hogs had wallowed. No other feet had trod that ground upon that day, and Camden felt sweat frosting new across

her forehead. It was she and she alone who'd done this thing.

Her bugle. She'd bought it years before in Kansas City: one of those army surplus places where she saw a heap of bugles in a window, and recalled at once how old Spring Davis had taught his famous Bugle Ann to respond forever. *I trained her to the horn. Same as—* She'd said those words at night, up near Heaven Hump, in the far-gone strange hour when Little Lady first was sniffing at the tall old man.

She raced to the house, now, and snatched the bugle from its hook. Out on the porch she made the first two notes, and more and more—the warm wind coming nigh to flutter at her dress, to take her auburn hair apart.

Down at the nearest fence, and pointing her bugle at the wooded hills out yonder, sending keen the notes to race past willows and up through harder timber on the higher slopes.

Yes, those were good music-calls to hear—at night especially, or in the dawn when some red-sided gray was stubborn in his holing, and the dogs were tired because they'd driven some other foxes earlier. But in the stare of day they sounded limp and futile. The tones screamed brassy, rapping the gullies.

Such neighbors as were not up at the Pettigrews' or gone to town—the nearest people working in their fields or kitchens—every ear could recognize those two round notes repeated often, and speculate upon them. Little Lady, shut up tight against the demands of cir-

cumstance: we all knew that. Here lived the summons, hard and constant. Only one gyp might be called by them—the same who had the marks and voice of Bugle Ann. Only she or the wraith of her mother would have answered and come in.

Over at the Davis place across two fields, old Spring creaked lamely from his chair upon the porch, and he could feel the cloud of misery come haunting.

“Adelaide,” he said. “It must be Camden. She’s trying to blow Little Lady in.”

“But they had her in a wire pen.” Mrs. Davis wrapped her apron around her hands.

“Fetch my bugle, too,” the old man ordered quietly.

He walked out across the rear yard, moving stiff and with a skinny majesty; and when he loomed like that you didn’t need to know he owned a little maltese cross to pin upon his chest and a gray slouch hat to wear on special days. He walked with the saddened kingliness of the few Confederates left to us, and you imagined you could hear drums a-rolling in the distance, a very long roll indeed.

He went past barn and cribs; and Mrs. Davis she went part way too, and then she stopped; and Gabe was seated on a keg beside the barn, riveting a tug-strap which had parted; and so he put his riveter down slowly, and came to stand beside Mrs. Davis, watching Springfield traipse ahead.

Neither of them might relate the whole story of that bugle stuck beneath the old man’s suspender, so brown and battered but with a shine about it. He didn’t know

the tale himself, except the brief things I'd related; nor did I know it in entirety.

It happened in the fall of 1918, when I was climbing along a ravine where I never expected to climb. Those ridges lay beside a river not as deep as our Indian River at home, and wider still than Heaven Creek; the name on maps was the Meuse, but we folks from America couldn't many of us pronounce it properly, so we called it the Muse, just like that.

And I was twenty-one, lonely for Missouri and the taste of a clean new hickory nut pounded on a rock—lonely more so for fox-hounds giving voice on a black-dark night. And I saw something lying in brush and wire, and it had a kind of glint in the last sun of day.

I went over and stood looking down, not touching it at first, for we were warned of things like that. Mess tins were lying everywhere, and helmets too—plenty of Kraut helmets, some of our own. There was old junk which French or Germans had dropped long before; those same hills had been drubbed by shells and dug by hobnails in earlier seasons.

Rust and moldy leather in all the thickets, and chunks of metal that once had been white-hot, and playing cards sometimes, and always the wire. (One variety of bob-wire hadn't even any rust on it: it was galvanized, kind of.) And what a place to discover a bugle.

This was nothing, a voice told me soft as silk, which it was unsafe to disturb. They had ordered us not to handle stuff—old grenades might explode—but the bugle had a golden lip and a little dark face in the hid-

den hollow which seemed to smile quaintly and say, "I'm good. You don't need to be fearful of me." So I picked it up.

There I stood, a nervous soldier all mud, and wondered where this thing had come from. Off behind the closest hill a battery of French .75's was going to it, *pound, pound, pound*, but those were big Swedes and Nordskis from the Northern states handling those guns, and sometimes they laid the stuff on so hard that captured Krauts asked please could they see our .75 machine guns. But it wouldn't have been some husky guy from Minnesota or elsewhere who dropped that bugle in the clay. They were all too busy with artillery to go a-bugling.

Holding the little horn in my hand, I stood awhile and dreamed over it, and the autumn sky filled rainier and grimmer; still I stood. It was not a military thing I was clutching so tight: it seemed rather as a hunting horn. I was what they called a runner, having just delivered a message, and on my way wearily back to my own outfit; but I lingered, studying and imagining what that trumpet could mean to me and to the world.

It was short and stumpy—I guess the type folks call a cavalry bugle—and it made you doubt that it was actually of modern make, there amid those fierce old ridges. For men had fought there from time long ago; great invasions once traveled those forests, a-horseback or on foot. I reckoned maybe they had come in chariots too, though I know better now; but I

was confident they'd had swords and spears and bows-and-arrows, which indeed they owned.

So it seemed that possibly those long-dead warriors grew tired on occasion of all their stamping and sword-play, and they said to one another: "We've had enough of this. We got to get out in the timber with the dogs." So they went, taking big packs of hounds along, and warranting that there would be deer-meat or boar-meat to toast above their fires when they returned.

Did the wild boars and tall horned stags—did the galloping bears know all the tricks of the foxes which we people used to run in Missouri? It could be believed—and maybe elderly, more ardent and ferocious tricks as well.

So you could see them swarming, if you let your imagination carry you along. First the wild beasts, dripping with lather and snorting as they fought to elude; and then the gaunt white-teethed hounds driving them; and finally men with helmets and lances and big knives in scabbards, waving their bows like a pack of Indians in a Western show, and shouting their battle cry and the hunting cry that went with it. Seemed like I could hear the deep rough voices bellowing, though all the French I knew was *Vive la France* and *Merci, beaucoup* and *Ma'mselle, voulez vous*—? and certain it was that the ancient hunters hollered none of those phrases.

But most of all I heard the horn or horns, the wind-ing smooth cry they made—keen as a slim tenor in a church choir, deep bass as the bottom of a rain-barrel.

And answering up the glens where now their skeletons must be mildewed, those dogs which spoke in the hunt made reply to the instruments that were blown.

And one hound more than all: it seemed that I could hear him or her, putting breath into a bugle all its own, and challenging the armed pursuers to do better if they could, but they never could.

So the guns went barking, and shells spoke like witches in the air above, and the First World War continued; it was my war and I had to go back to it, and leave those throngs of brawny men and long-legged beasts flocking across the little mountains as I had dreamed.

I took the bugle with care, and with a wadded rag I'd used for a handkerchief I wiped clay and some portion of corrosion from its cup, and carried it away. I pushed my gas mask aside where it dangled, and got the bugle fastened beneath a strap of my equipment; and thus Springfield Davis carried it in later years, tight under his suspender.

Later years indeed. It wasn't until he had bred Bugle Ann, and first led her out through Chilly Branch Hollow, and discovered the wonderful sound that haunted inside her and could emerge when she was shoving a fox—it wasn't until late in the 1920's that I went into the loft above our summer kitchen and dug the bugle out.

Spring said, "Listen to that voice, Cal and Bake Royster. It's not human for her to have a voice like that. Just as if she was playing cornets in a heavenly

band. Cal, if I had a trumpet, I'd train her to it. Make her come when I'd blow her in. A little golden horn. Not one of them crazy blowing-horns made out of goat's antlers, like the Armstrongs sent away for. Hell," said Springfield Davis, "that little lady ain't no goat."

"Spring," I said to the old man, "I've got a bugle."

"Whereabouts?"

"It's up in a barrel in the loft. It's put away with war souvenirs and such." I thought awhile; after all those years the recollection of my fancy came back to me: forgotten Europeans with beards and steel upon their heads, with stained shields and pennants hanging in firelight on the stony castle walls at home, all rampaging in a wilderness beside the Meuse River, and hounds crying ahead.

I said, never knowing quite why I spoke: "Come daylight, I'll get up on the stepladder and poke around in that pile of relics, and find the bugle. You wouldn't want a helmet to go with it, by any chance?"

"No," said Spring, "just the horn." And thus I gave it to him for a present, and thus he trained her well.

A good ten years it was, and here at last the horn came into play again. I heard them blowing now, far over at our place—Spring Davis and the daughter of the man he'd murdered over Bugle Ann (and still he hoped she'd nurture flesh of his descendants in her body). Both bugling—as if in wildest mockery and rivalry, and then somehow getting together in a warlike chorus, and then straying unhappily apart again.

They met down at the second fence, with Heaven

Creek bubbling meagerly in shady trees beyond, as if it and its crawdads had no concern with the strange power that dogs could wield over humankind.

Camden was drenched and scratched, for she had waded and she had gone through blackberry vines.

"You were blowing for her," the old man faltered. "I heard you. Thought I'd come to help."

"Oh, Mr. Davis," the girl cried, gripping him. "She's gone! If Benjy— It's Little Lady, Mr. Davis, like you guessed. She's out and gone."

THE ERRAND of mercy on which Benjy Davis had departed was fraught with delay. The old couple lived in tears, and they couldn't decide what clothing to pack with them on their desolate visit; and at the last minute the old lady made Benjy drive back three miles, for she had forgotten a basket of cookies she planned to offer to her grandchildren.

Thus it was two o'clock before he returned to the Pettigrews' and caught a snack there from baskets which the womenfolks had fetched—later still when he got home to Heaven Creek and heard bugles resounding.

He went posting to his mother's place, and learned the tidings about Little Lady's vanishment. There may have been some compassion toward Camden stealing into his conscience before he arrived; now flames were spitting, and raggeder than before. He was no man to trifle with when he stopped by our place, gaunt and mean and sweaty, and carrying a repeating rifle along with him.

I was atop a ladder out behind the house, picking harvest apples for my mother to can, but I came down fast enough when I observed that Indian look on Benjy's countenance.

"They never ran past here," I said, when he questioned me. "How come the .22?"

"Got it loaded with long rifles," said he, referring to the type of cartridges. I figured what would befall Bristles when he was caught up with.

"I'll finish these apples, then I got a thing or two to do at the barn, then I'll join you in the woods. Whereabouts?"

He said, "I'll be over toward Bachelor's, in the high timber. The rest—" For a moment his throat was so dry he couldn't talk. He looked at the ground, and then lifted his black eyes. "Pa and Gabe are out. Of course Pa can't move very sprightly. Ma said they'd already combed all along the middle parts of Heaven Creek, with Camden, using the horns. But no results."

When he uttered the name of Camden he sounded so unsteady that a stranger might have deemed Benjy was on the verge of crying. That was bad. It marked

the most dangerous wrath which lived in this young man and could emerge when it was touched off by any grievous spark. Once I had observed him speak that way in McKee's Crossing when he overheard some political enemy of his father's describe Spring Davis as a jailbird. The man was only thirty-eight, and a ditcher by trade, and weighed a good two hundred; but he had Benjy up before the Justice, after he had been patched and recovered. Benjy Davis paid twenty-five dollars and costs for that assault.

Amongst the trees I joined him, soon as I was free to, and searched with him until dark. We didn't find hide nor track of Little Lady, nor of the fugitive who had charmed her away. Far behind us on both sides, along Chilly Branch and in Big Panther Hollow, the bugles still were blossoming their message. Little Lady heeded not.

We talked of trailing her with other dogs, and then we shook our heads, for that would never work. No proper fox-hound of the kind we raised would cry another dog—except old Toul Sector, whom I mentioned earlier, and he would only cry himself. No, voice and eyes and trumpet calls must do the trick.

"Reckon she'll come back," I told Benjy at sunset, "when she's good and ready. Of course—"

He looked at me, he turned his bony face aside.

"It'll be too late by then," I finished up.

"It's too late now," he said. "But that's not all. I got to get her back. For Pa is old; I'm scared he'll have a stroke, a-worrying. Bake, I got to keep on hunting,

long as I can. You know how they act at such a time—run heedless on the pavement, any road or any place. These folks in cars go burning up the slab a mile a minute. If she was hit—” He could say no more.

I went home through the dusk. Wouldn't have left then—for often I've missed some meals without their bothering me—except that I was concerned about the whiskey situation. My own little father wasn't near as old as Springfield Davis (and a mighty friend of his) but frailties had crept upon him. One of them concerned the pleasant stuff which he called Forty-Rod, and now the doctor had limited him to one pint per day.

These pints he preferred to absorb in the evening, or later when we were out with the dogs; and I carried the magic key in my pocket at all times, for the flesh of my father Cal Royster could turn remarkably weak on occasion.

He was awaiting me on the front stoop, hunched down like a dwarf, wagging his beard and doubtless grinning within it when he made out my shape.

“You're late,” he said. “And your mother's got the ham shoved up in the warming oven. They found anything?”

“Not a sign.”

“Reckon she's run over somewheres.”

“Pshaw, scat,” I said, “she'll turn up. Brisk as always, and carrying mongrel pups.” I went out to the tool shed and unlocked the cupboard where we kept my father's case. I even cast an eye on an extra bottle with

speculation in my own interest, but soon decided No. Whiskey and me never did mix: used to get fighting mad, long ago when I got out of the Veteran's Hospital, and I paid worse fines than Benjy Davis ever did.

Supper was a quiet institution at our home in these modern times, what with Delbert and LaVonne sitting over in their own house, and Tom and Ermine sitting in theirs, and Lucy gone to work in Joplin. But it was quieter than ever this night: my father was deep immersed within the Davis problem, though he didn't like to let on. He said gloomily that he reckoned Camden had opened that pen gate apurpose, to spite Benjy; and Ma told him to put such words back in his throat and never use them again, and eat his roasting ears and beets instead.

The ham had been cut from the carcass of our own tall red hog, and it was good as ever I cured; the corn came from the third series of rows we planted, and thus was flavorful; only my good mother could contrive such smooth and buttery beets. But on this evening we might have been eating straw for all the taste we found. Pa never even lauded because he had done the milking all by his own self.

I went to see how our dogs were situated, and Pa walked in darkness, following me there. Thus we stood beside the wire, with hounds jumping and wagging on the other side.

"Bake, I'm reminded."

"Reckon I am also." For the image was around us, mirrored through years, of how in similar fashion we

had stood beside rusty remains of the Bachelor's wire to discover the collar and fragments of Bugle Ann.

My father came nearer, and slid his finger under my belt, and with the other hand he tapped me on the chest. "Bake, I been thinking."

"Have you thunk up any good ideas?"

"The wind's just right, what there is of it, and I felt the grass a while ago. Dogs hain't been run in a coon's age—" Three entire days, in fact. "And they're spoiling. They'd do better than you and Benjy and the rest."

I stood and smelled the timber which spread close. "You think she'd leave him, and join the pack?"

"By this time, yes. I get certainer and certainer, the more I dwell on it."

Those hills had conversations and silences all their own, but distant shadows were still disturbed by a bugle cry. I concluded it was Camden making it, or maybe Benjy blowing his father's horn.

"Take them in the dog-box," Pa continued.

"Dog-box won't hold but five." We were speaking of the box on the back of my little truck.

"Five will be aplenty. Take some that are always out ahead, and mean business; we might even take a couple of the noisy-mouthed persuasion. It would—" He hunted out the word. "—stimulate her. And that way we could cross the ford, and make a cast on Heaven Hump. Their voices will carry far from there, and she'll know what's doing within five minutes after the pickup. I'm too blame rickety to walk that far. When you're rising seventy you'd ruther ride."

He gave me his pint bottle to keep for him, so he might have some liquor left to solace him beside the fire. Pa trotted to the house to tell Ma, and get a snack; I took a lantern and selected the hounds. Five Point Nine and Bullard's Daisy, Vinegar Blink and Border Princess and old Toul Sector: these were the lucky five, and the rest lamented it.

THE BUGLE CRY had silenced before we reached the higher ground. As soon as the fire raised color in the sky, we had some company. We heard the rattle of the ancient Davis truck, and here they came, laborious up a pair of tracks which crawled from gulleys: Benjy and his father. They brought no dogs along.

Benjy installed Spring Davis on a seat, and stood with us to listen. "I didn't have a stomach for this thing to-night," he said, but in no way of blame.

"Pa thought it might work."

Spring Davis sat motionless upon his stump. "You mean—with Little Lady?"

I said, "She's bound to hear them all."

"It's well into evening," old Spring said. "She might be willing to depart from him by now."

Our hounds had been a long time making any pick-up—why, I do not know: perhaps so many human paths had walked that way, and they were puzzled. Then Border Princess got the necessary whiff, and let her high squawl go, and then the rest were with her.

"She's always right there on the cast," my father said. "She can drive, too, when she's got a mind. The trouble is, you can't depend on her no way."

She took them off. Five Point Nine and Vinegar Blink were right there, Bullard's Daisy giving a good voice not far behind, Toul Sector silent after a few grunts. I figured he was working with the rest, but saving his old wind until he got himself excited. The fox strung over east, where Benjy and I took some timber out the year before. There were a lot of unburned trash piles such as foxes like to sneak among. They crossed the Spur, and echoed out of hearing.

I wondered just where Camden was and how she fared. I doubted then that she and Benjy had some further words that day; sometimes you find the air too charged with friction and you never even squeak. But he seemed thinner, as he always seemed when mad. His active eyes were narrowed down, and showed a gleam when shadows left his face.

And then I thought of just how Little Lady and the scrub-brush mutt had skipped away that morning, scooting wildly round and round, and running bigger cir-

cles as she sniffed the wind of liberty and found it good. Away back in fastnesses they must have run, but always he would stay attendant, courting her; and so she stuck to her opinion: dog's opinion, just as straight as human-kind, when folks are never there to meddle—that he was just the one for her.

No bell and book, but only choice and luck and final certainty. I reckoned that the first fierce race of hounds had risen from such queer determination, and maybe the chance of that same swinging gate—if early men had gates across the mouths of caverns where they slept.

I minded how my Ma had kept a fine cocoon upon a twig—one of those brown cigar-butt things which worms will spin along the watersprouts. And then in May it hatched, and there was something very fine to see: a rich-marked nighttime butterfly with bands around her body, and weighted heavy with her eggs.

My mother put her up against the soft mosquito bar which we had tacked across a window frame, and from the deepest wells of timber all the other bugs came dancing. There they leaped and flutter-flattered, crawling up the outside of the bar, and making musty odors which we smelled, and flapping with their five-inch wings to show how proud and bold they were—a queer assemblage, big as bats, but prettier.

And I was little, glad to hold the lamp and watch. I'd seen a peck of millers smudge themselves on that same lamp; but no, not these. The loveliness they sought had wings of their own kind—not fire in its heart—and so they rivaled and they tossed against the pale mos-

quito net. Then Ma shook loose one corner, and she let the butterfly go out. (They call them moths, too, nowadays; someone told me; but it had the colors of a butterfly.)

Wonder of wonders. For the male she chose was not the finest of the lot, as we thought she deserved. She took a scrub, a beggar-man. He had one feeler gone, and pieces missing from his wing, and half his pretty color knocked away. But he was just the sort for her. She wanted him, and him alone, though there were full a dozen handsomer than him and fresher too.

A kind of lesson in that recollection; and I had a mind to speak of it to Benjy, till I saw his face. Better not speak, I ordered to myself. There's times you'd best retain your own counsel, no matter how much wisdom cries to be displayed.

Then, before the dogs came back, we heard the horn again.

It called in lonely desperation from the valley back of us, and small words which we'd planned to use were left unsaid. In the gloom I watched poor Benjy's face go into knots, and smooth out like it was hammered flat. He never spoke, but every muster of that bugle went right through him.

"That'd be Camden," came the faint remark of Spring. "Reckon she went over to her place a while, maybe to eat some supper, and wash up, and maybe rest."

My father coughed and—"Reckon so," he said.

But stronger than the trumpet cry, and in a contrary

direction, our Royster dogs began to be apparent now. That same beleaguered fox was ankling north, and they were right on top of him, giving a healthy chop like ducks a-flying high.

"I'll testify!" my Pa exclaimed. "That little white-faced gyp of ours: she's really got the knack tonight. That's her, that's Border Princess! She's got her muzzle fair between that critter's legs."

The bugle left off clamoring and asking, "Little Lady, where on earth you gone?" It died down, caught its breath and ceased. For Camden too had heard the hounds, and maybe she had seen our fire smudge.

And far away another throat was opened now; another tongue was flapping in the night, and Spring got off his stump, and Benjy froze. It was Little Lady, sure enough. Away off yonder, like she singled out within a separate century, she lifted up her melody.

All sole alone, remote upon the track, she told our Royster dogs to wait, hold on, she'd come to join them; how they needed her, she cried. She had a reputation to exalt which had not been the lot of any hound along that creek, or on the Indian River over where the moon came up belatedly. It was the voice of Bugle Ann, without a doubt; so once again our goose flesh pinked upon our hides; it always did; we couldn't help it, even though we knew so well the tale of this identity.

My father sank his hand around my sleeve. "By God," he whispered, "they fetched her up." So I shivered all the more, at least inside. Because it sounded for a moment as if he meant that someone else had been

fetched up—someone whose gray skull and particles lay deep beneath a sweet-crab tree, back over at the Davises’.

Sometimes, by folks who never were so fortunate as us and never heard the voice of Little Lady or her dam, I have been asked just how it sounded. It sounded like the mystery of lonesome woods where maybe ghosts were foot-loose. It made you think of gypsy-dogs, and hollering around the wigwams where some Indians dwelt; and maybe greasy men with hair tied into scalp-locks, going out to tackle catamounts. It had the air and smell of danger; still there lived a sympathy.

I reckon when the first ferocious pioneers came poking on across the Mississippi, they led some dogs like that along. So the germ lived sleepy in the blood of old Missouri hounds, time out of mind, until a miracle of breeding worked by Springfield Davis brought it out again, but only in one body and one soul; and able, by the grace of God, to be transmitted to her daughter.

Our fire picked out Camden, coming between the oaks—first her pale face drifting and her pale hands with bugle-horn tight clasped, and then the darker movement of her gown. Her gown was blue again, with flame suggesting purple on it also; and I could well recall the night in 1935 when we first saw Little Lady in a nearby grove, and heard her voice before we saw her; and I remembered how my father cried.

For on that other occasion Camden dressed herself in blue, though this gown she had on this night could never be the same. There she stood at last, close by.

Greetings were murmured low to her, but haltingly, because we all were centered in our hearts upon that hound voice pealing out behind our Royster dogs. Camden held her chin on high, and kept her eyes shut as she listened.

I don't think she and Benjy interchanged a word. Not even when the fox had holed, not even when our hounds came in, not even when Little Lady panted up at last, responding to a final order from the horn.

CAMDEN WAS SITTING in the breakfast nook they'd made in that old kitchen, when Benjy finally came and stood beside her. There had been no awkwardness about the homeward journey; they hadn't been compelled to ride three in the cab of that small truck, and crowded close. Camden had tripped off solitary on the forest path as soon as Little Lady made her return. Camden had a flashlight with her, and full well she knew the way, and could have found it in the darkest night which ever pressed.

Old Spring kept Little Lady at his place that night; he said he'd worried so, and wanted her to lie beside his bed.

Long afterward I learned the thorny words exchanged.

"You did it," Benjy Davis told his wife, "like you said you'd do."

"It's all my fault," she whispered. "I'll bear the blame. I guess you'd not believe me if I told you it was done by accident."

"You contend it was an accident? It wasn't done for spite?"

"No, not for spite," she said. "I did it. I don't know how it came about."

He shuffled round. "It's wrong to have some strains mixed up. There's types of blood that quarrel with other blood."

And Camden rolled her flashlight back and forth upon the table, never lifting up her eyes. "You're speaking of the Davis blood and Terry blood, I feel."

"I never mentioned such a thing. But you— You honey-loved that dirty beast. You kept him here, a-feeding and a-babying. If you'd drove him off, the way I ordered—"

So it went, and there are never words which scald so hot as those in anger, pitched back and forth between young people who are strong in love.

Types of blood that quarrel with other blood . . . He spoke of this again, and she flung the same hot charge that he was meaning Davises and Terrys. All right, he said. Suppose he was? She'd willed the deed, by wishing it. It was her stubborn unconscious self, a-praying

that the hook upon that gate would never find the staple; so it never had.

She'd done it, Benjy cried, just as wickedly as if with full intent; and now they'd be a laughingstock all through the whole vicinity. They'd picked and chosen and denied a breeding-match with any hound around there, when there wasn't a man who hunted fox within a radius of fifty miles who wouldn't have got down on his knees and begged the Davises to bring the gyp to his best hound.

She didn't scream at him to stop, for she was past that stage now. The Camden heritage was ruling her at last, and it was mighty stern and proud. She rose up soberly while Benjy still assailed, and she went upstairs and shut her door. Her mind was made. She wouldn't stay to have his eyes accusing when his voice had ceased.

So they slept apart that night, and in the forenoon Camden walked through corn rows to the Davis place. She paused to kiss her mother-in-law, and then went on through the setting-room and found Spring Davis throned as usual in his green rocking chair. He sat out on the porch where his dim vision might command a view of the distant road, though nobody went along it very often.

Little Lady was spread beside him, legs straight out, and tail whacking the floor when she heard Camden's step. The girl got down on her knees beside the old man's chair.

"All I can say is I'm sorry."

He moved his silky white head in agreement.

"There's reason for regret. But I do believe you never done it a purpose."

"Benjy believes I did."

Springfield sighed, and groped around with his fingers until they found Little Lady's ear, and he played softly with this precious toy. "It's a matter sole between you two. I never did hold with elder folks mixing amid problems of the young."

For a time Camden sat with glance turned down, but her blue eyes were wet no longer: she'd expended all her tears. Then she raised her face to meet Spring's gaze.

"Mr. Davis, there's the matter of Little Lady."

He shifted around, sad and uncomfortable in that most comfortable rocker in the world. He got out his tobacco sack and put it back again. "Oh, there's nothing can be mended now where she's concerned. Wait until the litter comes, and then get rid of them in any easy manner. Next year—" he brightened just the slightest. "Next year we'll mate her right, I reckon."

"Until you ask for her," said Camden softly, "I'd like to take the care."

The old man made a sound inside his chest, as if his heart was saying things in other languages. "I'm old. I might not be here in another sixty days. Are you dead certain that you want to have her close to you?"

She told him, speaking flat: "The way that Benjy feels— No, Mr. Davis, I should be the one. I took care of Bugle Ann; and I reared Little Lady and the rest

when Bugle Ann was sick and couldn't feed them proper. I'll cherish Little Lady till she whelps."

He nodded; it was hard for him to build a word. Slowly then did Camden rise and kiss Spring Davis on his cheek. She got a leash, and she took Little Lady back across the field. Upstairs in the Terry place she packed the things which she desired to take; perhaps she worked in fog, but it is certain that her mind was made.

Benjy was busy at the barn. His best cow lay poorly with milk fever, and he waited for a vet to come from town. But now he witnessed Camden walking back and forth. One suitcase she brought out, and then another, and a box with dresses in it. Benjy went to stand beside the car.

When she emerged again he questioned her, and with a stranger's tone. "Going somewhere?"

She said, "I'm going home."

"Where's that?"

"Up yonder," and she nodded toward the north and west. "In the lowest corner of Jackson County, where once I went before."

He stood and looked, not at the wife he loved, but at the timberland. "Your Uncle Elnathan is dead. A year ago last Christmas. Have you forgot?"

"Florry's there," Camden told him. "Or have you forgot? My cousin, and she's teaching in the new school that they've built, and she's hired a man and wife to work the place. She's always wishing that I'd come to visit. Guess the time is here."

Wrens were busy in their tiny house atop the garden post, and chattering because a jay had come; both the young folks watched the birds a while. "A visit?" Benjy Davis asked again.

"Yes, a mighty long one."

He cleared his throat; his shoulders seemed to bend and tighten when he did it. "I guess you made your choice. There's nothing I can say."

"You said enough. Last night, and some before."

"You take the car. The corn is doing good. If prices hold when we have got it picked, I'll trade that old wreck which I keep at Pa's, and buy another car."

She moved up toward the porch, and Benjy followed her. "If you need money—"

"No, I don't," Camden said. "Have you forgot again? I sold those lots my father used to own in Warrensburg; I've got the money put away. Come on," she whispered, gently as could be to Little Lady.

She led the fox-hound out, and Benjy Davis gave a growl. "Who told you you could take her with you? Who?"

"Your father told me," Camden said. "And me, I guess I told myself. Good-bye." She drove away.

AT TIMES THERE dwells a meanness in the best communities—in a community of human folks, or one of fox-hounds, for I've seen it work both ways. The news came out as soon as Camden stopped down at the bank in Wolf Center, to cash herself a check. Roy Lancey saw the pretty gyp within her car, and all the suitcases piled up.

So people had their calls to make, inquiring of the Davises, and then the word went round. *Vacation, ha!* the women all declared; the most of them were on the side of Camden, critical of Benjy; though there were hearts which held a jealousy for both, and spoke it out.

Plenty menfolks, on the other hand, made grim opinion of the waywardness of Camden, going off to leave her husband. They swore they'd never let their own wives do a thing like that, though just what means they'd have taken to stop their wives in such a case they never did describe.

We heard that Benjy stalked the woods, the .22 beneath his arm, determined to hunt down that Bristles dog. But any trail the critter left behind him was just as hard to discern, now that his mischief was worked, as it had been when he and Little Lady first departed to the wilderness. No track of him was ever glimpsed again; he'd gone and lost himself in other neighborhoods long since; and people guessed that Satan must have come to fetch him.

Weather turned to wrath the day when Camden left, and we had storms from hell to breakfast. Heaven Creek was flooded wide. We Roysters never ran our fox-hounds for a solid week, until a night was right.

Then out we came, and Benjy heard, and the seasoned ears of Springfield Davis might detect the chop of Five Point Nine a-hanging out in front. So pretty soon the twin lights of their truck came nigh; they had some dogs with them, and let them loose to seek the pack. Thus we were hunting once again, and liking it, though there was one name that was never mentioned.

Benjy kept a solitary life that year, eating mostly at his folks' and keeping well aloof except when working with the dogs. He had another dog to hunt with, come the middle of the winter. Late one afternoon, when he

was getting feed down for the stock, he heard the grinding of an unfamiliar car. He came out, and there it stood, a blue sedan. The face above the driver's wheel was unfamiliar just as well.

Some ears went up behind the seat, and there was wagging fit to kill. Benjy walked with slow pace to the car and turned the handle of the door. Little Lady dove upon him.

"My name's Butler," said a young man, grinning there in front, and they shook hands. It seemed that Butler was engaged, or nearly so, to Camden's cousin Florry; he had to drive to Rolla to see his folks, and our region wasn't much outside his route. Camden had asked him to fetch the fox-hound home again.

"Better stop a while," Benjy muttered, but young Butler claimed he had to be a-getting on.

Benjy said abruptly, speaking from a heart so mightily disturbed: "How's my wife?"

"Camden? She's just fine, far as I know. I only saw her briefly when I stopped to get the dog." In another minute Butler'd shaken hands again and driven off. Benjy stood, with Little Lady rubbing tight against his leg, and watched the car recede. He put his hand down slow, a-feeling Little Lady's head and mouth and then her soft and tender underside.

She was dried up, but you could tell she'd had some pups. "Those hairy feists," thought Benjy Davis. "Bet ten dollars Camden kept the lot. She couldn't drown a pup. She couldn't—" Then he spat, and swore within himself, and lifted up his arm to brush across his face.

He went back, old and heavy, to his work, and Little Lady bounced along.

But rumors still persisted through the months as they were bound to do. At least one whisper reached the ears of Benjy and drove deep like a nail into his brain.

It was warm spring—I remember, because I had picked up the two least Armstrong girls on the side road from Chilly Branch (they had whole fists full of bluebells and corn lilies; they were good to look at, with their scraggly gingham dresses, and warm faces all excited by wildflowers and the spring).

Benjy turned sharp right out of his lane. As our cars met and passed I must have looked my astonishment, because he was dressed up with a suit and necktie—not his usual clothing.

I peered back; he had halted in the weeds, so I stopped my own car and walked toward him. He didn't get out—just sat there with his hand on the wheel and the clean new motor still turning, even when I stood near the door.

“Word came to me,” he said. “Maybe it's not so. I did hear that Camden was sick in the hospital.”

“Whereabouts?”

“Guess it would be in Warrensburg, Johnson County. That's just about as close to the farm as Independence or Kansas City, and her relatives have got an old doctor friend there.”

I had heard the same tale through my sister-in-law, and even more than that, but judged that Camden

would inform her husband if she really wanted him at her bedside. "Do you think she's took very bad?"

"The story that came to me didn't say."

This was merely a time for the rubbing of fingers on a car door, for listening to the light breeze and new frogs in the slough—not a time for asking specialized questions.

"You seem to be on your way."

His tanned face looked mighty grim. "Little Lady's over at Pa's. I've fixed it with your brother Del, for him to look after the stock." Away he traveled.

He never did want to speak about it much, but I had known him since the week of his birth; I could recall a thin child with a black scalp of hair, who begged me to fetch home a German beltbuckle with *Gott Mit Uns* on it, so I did bring him one. And we had been on top of the hills with our dogs for many a year.

Thus later he related some portions of what was in his heart, but the whole story was long in the telling. He said that he broke a pinion or some such contrivance in the differential of his car when only part way to Johnson County. Therefore it was late in the evening before repairs could be made and the remaining miles could be crossed, and he might park beneath strange trees in Warrensburg.

He had inquired the way and found it with ease. Now that he was arrived he couldn't bring himself to step inside the hospital door. He walked across and around, patrolling the region of the hospital for hours. He was fighting back the vanity of his spirit, and then

yielding once more, and having it rise in wrath to direct his steps.

There spread ghastly bright lights in what might have been an operating room; and he thought of Camden there with masked people all about; he thought of her lying silent beneath some napkins on her face, as he had witnessed in moving pictures.

So at last Benjy tore his legs loose from the ropes which bound them. He forced himself along a sidewalk and through a door, determined to stand beside her bed; and maybe she would let him take her hand; but maybe she would only turn her head slightly to the side, and look away forever.

There didn't seem to be anybody in the hospital offices at that hour. Benjy went a-hunting. The scent of awful drugs was in his nostrils, and fearful restricted silences bleating in his ears; then he would hear a murmur behind a door which he couldn't understand. In one room some poor soul was weeping aloud, as if in pain. Not groaning, not screaming high, he said; but just crying as if so sad, so sad.

Down a far corridor at last he saw a little desk and a white shape sitting. Thus he went up, bareheaded and on tiptoe and all constrained, asking after his wife but not saying that she was his.

"Mrs. Camden Davis?" The nurse or sister (Benjy didn't know; she wore a queer cap) repeated the name that way. She didn't say, "Mrs. Benjamin S. Davis."

The lady smiled and said, "Why, she's just fine. She was discharged from the hospital yesterday."

"I'm obliged to you," said Benjy, and he turned and walked away. The nose of his automobile seemed pointing toward the late Mr. Elnathan Camden's farm, over yonder across the county line, when again Benjy stood in the street. Like an eager metal dog the car seemed lifting up imaginary ears, demanding, "Shall we go?"

But sternness of nature and habit wouldn't let him soften. His spirit should have been buzzing with reassurance, and thankfulness that the one he loved was now strong. Instead there dwelt in him only the same sodden emptiness which had oppressed ever since a special hour in August, so far and hideously gone.

He climbed into his car and drove back to the house above Heaven Creek. He only stopped once on the way; it was after daybreak when he got home.

CERTAIN I AM that Benjy cursed himself a thousand times for insolence and the cruelty which he awarded Camden. A lesser man—or kinder, softer—or one less flavored by the stony happenings that made their mark before: oh, such a man could not have stood it long. He'd been there, low upon his knees, begging by all that he held sacred in its beauty, begging for mercy and forgiveness and a swift return.

Not Benjy. That was not the Davis way. Just like his father, quiet and tough and knotty (one wife dead so long behind old Spring, and seven children perished with her when the smallpox struck, and sixty-one years

old the time he sired Benjy). Not another person in our region could have shot Jake Terry down for the apparent slaying of Bugle Ann; plenty would talk, and wish to take such strong revenge, but none would have dared to pull the trigger.

Other young husbands might have argued with their wives, and yelled and tilted, spoken abuse and taken it; they might have even severed paths awhile, although I doubt it. But once the evil stood committed, they would have felt a change of heart, and crept around and cried amends.

Not Benjy Davis, once again. He went his stubborn way in solitude; maybe he wanted to melt; he couldn't melt because he never had the habit. He told me once, in purest confidence, that he had started letters plenty of times. He sat there in the breakfast nook and scratched on drugstore paper. *My Dear Camden*, he'd begin. Or *Dear Wife, How are you? I am fine—*

He had neither mood nor nature for the task. He couldn't speak the emptiness within himself, the raw regret, the love he'd borne and still would bear, no matter how she stayed away. So another wad of paper in the stove, another rub on Little Lady's head, another walk outside to listen to the whippoorwills or sleet, depending on the season.

He had made the deepest hurt in her—far graver than she hacked in him—so he could not forgive himself; and so he walked through life, a young man turned to gnarls. He worked his farm, he tended on his parents, faithful and devoted as could be, though never speak-

ing long; he went hilltopping with the rest of us throughout the many months, but never found such childish joy as he had known before. And all his silences were longer.

I think it works that way complete, and always has: we find it much a simpler thing to disregard the wounds which other people tear in us than to forgive the wounds we make in them. Benjy Davis was a walking sermon on this theme—hard-faced and hawk-eyed, looking maybe older than he was, and working hard, and never drinking much, and losing sleep (because you'd see his light at night, and reckon he was reading from the *Little Journeys* which I bought in Joplin, second-hand and bound in leather, and gave to him and Camden for a wedding gift).

Thus lagged a summer, winter, spring again, and on, until two years and more had passed since Camden fled away to Jackson County. People had talked about the Davis business until they wore it nigh to death, and buried it—and sometimes dug it up again.

Oak leaves curled once more, the maples frittered off their yellowness and red; thorn-apples turned to pink, and there was smoky haze banked up against the clouds each sunset.

All the hound-men in that area began to lay their bets. Early and late their dogs burst through the valleys; this was a time for culling the packs by hand, and loosing them to run by day instead of night, trying to correct all faults which showed, and robbing Peter, paying Paul—looking at toe-pads, changing feed, and

guiding young hounds in the manner of the best and eldest. The running of the Butternut, we called it, and the day approached.

Not many dogs were registered around there—none of our Roysters', and few of any other folks'. We knew the lines full well; we'd seen the Walker strain come in and push the other traits aside. We had our Triggish types, and plenty of the Spaulding kind—the July or Maryland we recognized—but you'd find very few of our fine hounds set down in any stud book.

We didn't name our greatest race to be Field Trials or anything so fancy; we never had a Derby Stakes. Just local bench, for those who cared, and then the Butternut.

Just why they called it the Butternut race is more than many could have told you, but certain old folks knew the tale. Some people thought that it was on account of autumn, and the pointed nuts which crowded trees, and then fell off and turned their greenish fuzz to brown. But though the butternuts were there, and other kinds to tempt the boys, the name of "Butternut" had history within its syllables.

Because the old tan Rebels of the long ago were called by Yankees, "Butternuts." They didn't have the proper sort of cloth for uniforms, and had to dye it from the husks of nuts, like squaws. So finally they took in pride the name applied to them, and used it for their own.

The war was fought, and soldiers came traipsing home—at least those menfolks came who hadn't found

a couch in Arkansas or Tennessee. One fine autumn day some early Davises and Lanceys and the rest, they had their dogs a-working on a fox or two; and bets were passed, and arguments were aired. A jug of liquor was the prize.

That's how it started, in the olden times, and through the years our Butternut was always set for fall. It got to be an institution—a reunion, too, for all the Rebel Butternuts turned out. They met, they ate, they downed some jugs; their wives and sisters had a clack of gossip, and children galloped underfoot. (In time they widened it, thus including neighbors who had worn the Blue and fought upon the other side.)

I could remember when I was a child, ten years before the First World War: it was exciting, and we used to hold our breath against the weather, praying it would be good. Oh, it was hard to sleep at night. And waking up before the day, and waking slow, and then awaking sudden all at once, as children do, and thinking, "It's today—the Butternut!" and grinning underneath the quilt, and never sleeping more till roosters started crowing.

Then up, and barefoot in the kitchen, running out for morning chores, and everybody in bustle all around. Baskets on the table, piled high with bowls and pans—the apple salad with its tasty dressing, and sweet-potato pies, and ham all fried and cold, and one big cake with little speckled candies on the top. My mother bought those candies at the Edwards store: they looked like pills and strange pink seeds, and green and yellow

too, with one round silver kind which had a bitter taste. And this was sacred to the Butternut—the only time we had it—cake like this, all solid with frosting dried and candies sticking thick.

My grandfather was larking round, wearing the hat he said he wore when he had ridden in the cavalry, and it had raggedness around the brim where mice had chewed. My mother directing him, sharp and smart: "Now, don't you dare to take another swallow, Pappy. Remember how last year you went to sleep in Armstrongs' wagon, and you missed the Race?" And Grampa only grinned, and winked his eye and smacked his lip at me. Down at the grove he'd lock his arm with old Cap Hurly, and they'd sing Rebellion songs.

Oh, yes—the sharp-tooth yellow leaves a-gliding down, and people building tables out of planks fresh cut at Lancey's sawmill, and many dogs snapping at flies and scratching and licking, and turning up their mournful eyes because the Race hadn't begun as yet.

They had a Bench Show first, with pretty ribbons for the prizes—ribbons purple, blue and red, and stamped with gilt. They had to be sent away for, and they cost a sight, and we kids thought that it was solid gold, on all that printing.

Cap Hurley didn't own a dog—not any more; he'd lost his farm and all his folks were dead, and it was simple charity which made the younger Pettigrews retain him as a hired man. Yet he had ribbons from those other Butternuts so long before; he pinned them fast upon his shirt, with his Confederate medal; and the

younger men would kind of tease, and Ma would order me to come away from where they were laughing, on account of old Cap Hurley and the awful words he used when he was mad.

Sometimes there'd be a fight or two, but only sometimes. And the chop of hounds, the smell of crisping fall-time leaves, and distant smoke which drifted; and other rich and oily smoke at hand, in certain years when our Congressman got generous and gave a whole or half a steer; then we had a barbecue.

This was the Butternut we'd managed, each autumn all along the years, though I missed a few when I was gone to war or in the hospital. A show, a race, a contest, and a get-together, with fiddle songs and ballads in the night that followed; and they used to have a superstition that any romance which developed at a Butternut would be blessed with scads of children.

Only some twenty years before, or less, when the Army needed special wood to use on airplanes somehow or other, they sent a bunch of knowledgeable men around in timberland, to hunt the necessary sort of walnut trees. Old Cap Hurley in his dying year still owned a patch of woods considered merely fit for hogs to range in.

Those Government men, they bought Cap Hurley's timber, nearly every stick of it; and he had paid but seven dollars taxes previously. The tall hard trees came crashing down, with only boys and squirrels resenting it. Cap Hurley had a mighty check, and he made Ernest Pettigrew drive him to town, and help him

to the wicket at the bank, with all Wolf Center standing thick to watch.

And when Cap died he left the bulk of his good fortune to the Pettigrews; everybody thought it well-deserved. But one fine thing he'd done for the vicinity: he'd taken that old hand-turned jug they used to use for treasure at the Butternut, with names of dogs and owners scribbled on in pencil. He made the local drug-and-watch-repair man send it off somewhere or other; and sad I must relate that it was not returned until Cap had died, a-chasing foxes in his sleep with dogs he hadn't heard for forty years.

But when the jug came back, delivered in a locked-up trunk down at the station, marvelous voices spread the news. That old gray jug with rosy varnish round the top—it wore a silver band, a band as broad as any lady's sash or even broader. On that silver stood engraved the name of every dog and every individual who owned him, who'd ever won the Butternut—all taken down, with dates, before the pencil marks were scrubbed away.

It was a monumental trophy sure enough; and each year after it was on display men locked it up again down at the bank; they only got it out, perhaps, when the Honorable Mr. Benton Parritt, our Congressman, brought bigwigs round to see it.

Then, each season when the date was set again, the Butternut jug came out of hiding, to be admired and desired by every soul who'd had a hound to win the race before, and every soul who hadn't. The name

of Springfield Davis blazed the most—nine times; and there were Maitlands, Pettigrews and Lanceys in profusion; old Ed Armstrong won it twice, and so did Pa; and thrice the name of Benjamin Davis loomed.

I was there once: Toul Sector, scarcely past his puppyhood, and how he did it may I never know. (Some neighbors swore I'd led him out the night before on a five-hour task, over the ordinary course all by his lonesome; and thus Toul Sector might have been a-crying his own peculiar scent when other people thought that he was crying fox. But just the same he won the race, in 1930, and never showed a fault.)

Perhaps that silver-belted jug came empty from the Wolf Center Savings Bank, Capital & Surplus \$35,000; but it was heavy as a load could make it, in the hour when the judges handed it out again, and people yelled and shot off guns. Somehow, mysterious and wonderful, it swished whenever you held it up; yet it was empty when the banker took it back to safety once again, with new names of hound and owner to be engraved.

Always a new name for the winning dog each year. That was a rule: no hound who'd ever won a Butternut could run in one again. And every owner limited to a single entry; it was No-Holds-Barred, a Jack-Pot, Kitty-Bar-the-Door and Free-for-All. A hound of any age, so long as he could run: a dog or gyp, it didn't matter which.

It was a Saturday—the last one in October, and it could only be postponed if every chairman on the main

committee (there were five) agreed unanimous. We poked and pecked at almanacs and signs, and listened to the radio, and trembled when the storms protracted; we quivered when it rained the night before, we said a Hallelujah when the morning dawned with just the barest delicacy of mist, and skies turned cool and saucer-blue above, and no southeast wind a-hinting.

IF WE'D POSSESSED burglars in our country they would have had good pickings on that Saturday, for practically every house was guiltless of life before ten o'clock when the Bench Show started in.

I was chairman for grounds and parking, like I'd been the last two years, so I was present at six o'clock or just before; my brother Del was chairman for refreshments and the barbecue, and he'd been there with other members of his committee since the night before, toiling with pit and firewood.

Smoke ascended spicy among the boughs and drifted out to scent the valley-sides of lower Heaven Creek. We'd held the Butternut in this same grove for at least a generation. There was a claybank out beyond, where

folks could sit by scores and catch each shouting of the dogs as they went speeding over the ravines.

Del Royster whispered in my ear a while, the hour when I came, and so I knew peculiar happenings were bound to show; but no one could have guessed the strange events to be detected on this day.

Just before our program started up, when I was working with a loose plank of the platform we had built on hollow tiles, I rose to see the form of Benjy Davis striding close and staring hard. His eyes were little chunks of coal, and he was pale beneath his tan as if he'd seen a dozen ghosts—and liked them, though they frightened him.

“She’s here,” he blurted. Something gave a pound inside me. I had to look away a minute, and never let him understand I knew already.

“Just who’s here?” I asked, pretending calm.

“Camden. She’s got a funny dog on leash. I guess it’s one of those—” He stared a moment longer, then turned abrupt and walked away, the judge’s badge apparent on his shirt.

He was a field judge for the Race, because he hadn’t entered any hound this year. No one could be a judge who’d entered, naturally; but most of them had more connections than you could shake a stick at, who were trying it. It had to be that way, for we were all related up: a dozen families, no more, made up the bulk of population; and there were seven Lanceys running in the Butternut alone. The judges strove to give an honest ruling, and seldom was the charge produced that they had favored cousins.

I worked an old brick underneath the plank so it lay true, and then I made my way toward that small table where the owners signed. A line stretched out, with dogs in tow, and Uncle Punch Lancey sat alongside old Ed Armstrong, signing hounds for Race or Bench or both.

And there stood Camden in the row, waiting her turn, and looking lovelier than any branch of autumn leaves. She wore a skirt and sweater of the shade of robins' eggs, and had her red hair wrapped up in a silken scarf. I went and grinned and squeezed her hand, as many others did; and usually the rest went off to whisper afterward, and wonder what this meant, and tip their crafty glance at Benjy.

"Well," I said, "it's good you've come."

"The Butternut," she said. "I didn't want to miss it."

"Camden, are you entering?"

She murmured that she was, and we both fell silent, looking down at that strange dog which she was leading. Bristles, sure enough—you couldn't miss the mark—with hair all bushy on his neck and face, though he had stifles built far out like Little Lady. He looked as stickery as that old skate who sired him.

"He's good," came Camden's little voice. "Bake, you never need to look like that. I haven't lost my mind."

But still I thought she had, and so did everyone. I gazed around for Benjy; he was standing, lonely and aloof beyond the chairmen's table, and people gave him room.

"Tell me, Bake. Is Mr. Davis here as yet?"

"No," I said. "He's far too old, and he has seen a lot of Butternuts. He doesn't care too much for bench, and the long program wearies him. My brother Tom will pick him up and fetch him, before the race begins this afternoon."

All this while the line deployed, moving on slowly to the entry table, and finally Camden waited with her sorry potlicker before the gaze of Uncle Punch.

Now he was liked—regarded with amusement too. But Uncle Punch was far too pompous and he had a stuffiness of attitude. He'd been a mailman in his time, and also did some veterinary work, and taught a singing school for years without success, and always ran for county clerk but never won. He was bald and brown and squinty-eyed, and tried to talk like any senator.

"Name?" he demanded, though he knew her name so well.

She gave her name.

"Bench or Race, or both?" he asked, and old Ed chuckled there beside him.

"Just for the Race," said Camden Davis, and that chuckle spread around, and Camden even smiled a small tight smile herself. She seemed to be pretending that Benjy was in Africa or elsewhere, though he stood barely twenty feet away.

"One moment," then said Uncle Punch. He laid his pencil down and squinted fierce at Camden. "The Race is only open to the folks in this here county. I take it that you're not a resident no longer."

Behind him, Benjy Davis cleared his throat. His face was burning bright, but still he never looked to watch his wife. "Uncle Punch," he called, no matter what it cost him in the coin of his embarrassment, "I guess that you've been misinformed. Camden's my wife, and she's officially a resident as much as you."

Uncle Punch Lancey pursed his lips solemnly, and seemed about to write, and then he put his pencil down again. "But this thing she's got with her. I always understood the Butternut was open solely to the breed of fox-hounds. I wouldn't try to run Old Rags, my collie," and a laugh went high but nervous through the crowd.

Camden stiffened. She seemed about to speak, but her young husband was ahead of her. "Uncle Punch," cried Benjy in disgust, "don't be a worse fool than you are! That dog is out of Little Lady. Little Lady won the Butternut three years ago—her first time in—as everybody knows. You can't scratch out a pup from any champion," and people buzzed about it. A dozen men declared, "That's right," and "Uncle Punch, your hounds—they never came from anything in any stud book." So he had to write it down at last.

The name was Little Bristles. Camden opened up a big limp leather bag a-hanging from her arm, took out a purse and paid five dollars entrance fee. She walked away, remote and never looking back, and all the kids were skirmishing to get another look at that strange Airedale-coated animal as if he was a lion or a bear out of a circus.

She placed her dog within her car, and let him lie

on blankets she had folded, and she fetched fresh water from the pump and filled his pan. She'd let him snooze, I knew, until the Butternut was called. The program started soon; and there'd be the Bench Show, then the barbecue and basket dinner. Then everyone would take it easy—sit and gab, and smoke, and visit round—until the Race was called.

The prayer was by the Reverend Monterey Adair. He had the church at McKee's Crossing—a heavy patient man who used to be a blacksmith up until he got the Call. We always started Butternuts with prayer (it kept the drinking down a mite) and Reverend Mont Adair distinguished on this day. For he made mention of the Psalms, and quoted them, and spoke of Nimrod and of Esau, and rugged Hebrew folks of yore who used to range the wilderness; and he believed they must have taken dogs along. And he remarked that it was dogs who licked the wounds of Lazarus.

He prayed that all the judges would find strength to be alert and honest in their judgments, which was proper for the Reverend Mont to plead, since he had a hound entered in the Butternut.

Then there came music, for as usual we'd hauled a little parlor organ from the Pettigrews', and Widow Amy Leah played it sweet. The crowd sang "Dixie" in honor of the famous Rebels—all departed now except for Springfield Davis, and he hadn't come as yet. And "Glory Hallelujah" in memory of Unionists.

Young Archie Armstrong sang, "The Hunting of John Peel" and sang it well, although he kind of drawled the words, since he was in a Gary Cooper mood

that month. And "Old Dog Tray"—he sang it for his second. Then up got Gabriel Strickland with his melodic guitar, and all his songs were better yet, for nobody nearby could tickle a guitar like him. "Old Blue" he sang, and "Ranger" and then "The Fox upon a Stilly Night." People clapped their hands off, and whistles sounded shrill.

The Bench Show started up, with dogs upon the platform—people holding high their tails to show how wonderful a form and carriage each one had. Although I didn't give a hoot for Bench, and always thought what was the use of holding any hound's tail up on high if he could never hold it up himself.

I sought out Camden, but discovered her among the younger women, speaking polite and cool-assured, while they questioned busily about the sweater which she wore, and wondered if she'd knitted it herself; she said she had, and would be willing to lend out the pattern.

I checked upon the parking situation, and we had to string a clothesline through the trees, to keep the newly-come arrivals from driving up too close and interfering with the Bench.

But all the while I searched for Benjy from the corner of my eye, and found him not. I went away from all the crowd at last, to hunt him out; and finally he was there, alone above the claybank cliff, sitting with arms around his knees, and studying the timberland of lower Heaven Creek as if he'd never seen a cottonwood or bush before.

Oh, I had known him since he dragged a little

wagon in the yard; and it was I who taught him how to fling his darts and whittle them from shingles.

"Benjy, you're maybe tasting better luck than you deserve."

"How so?"

"To have her coming back like this."

His voice was scratchy but it didn't shake in wrath. "I don't say she's come back. She's never spoke a word to me, nor acted like she saw me. No doubt she's only come to run that mongrel in the Race; and it's an insult to us all." But still he had no fury in his tone, for he was softened by the beauty of his wife, and seeing her in prettiness again.

"Bake," he said, "I guess you heard. I make no doubt that it was talked around. We've got a child."

"Oh, yes," I told him. "It was a boy, they say."

"And Camden never even sent for me, nor wanted me to stand beside her bed."

"You went—and you came back."

"She'd left the hospital; they told me she was fine. I couldn't bring myself to take a further step. I didn't know it was a baby at the time."

I'd had enough of his restraint and sourness. "This is your chance. It's my belief she came apurpose just to give you opportunity. I hope you won't be pickle-headed all your life, and lose your wife for keeps, and rob your own son of a father's care," and then I walked away. But Benjy never showed up for the Bench or barbecue; nor did I see him till the Race was called, and judges stood to get their places and assignments.

MY OWN NEPHEW it was who plotted to postpone the coming of Spring Davis to that race. Little F.D.R.—for that was what we called him, since his name was Franklin Delano—he got enamored of some crimson creeper leaves outside the second-story screen at home. The screen was old and wouldn't stand for foolishness, and F.D.R. rode down upon it through the honeysuckle bushes underneath.

Tom said that you could hear him all the way up to the senior Lancey place, and why we didn't have proceedings interrupted at the Butternut because of all that howling, Brother Tom could never rightly under-

stand. It meant a rushing to the nearest doctor, which was nine full miles, because Tom's wife Ermine was certain that poor F.D.R. was smashed beyond repair.

The doctor tapped and peeked and poked; he gave the child an apple, and commented wisely on the texture of the Lancey-Royster skull. Then they drove back in thanks, but it was late as all-getout; and thus Spring Davis never got a glimpse of any dog before the Race began.

He came sedate but eager-eyed, with people shaking hands and welcoming on every side. He looked like majesty itself, all dressed up in his long gray coat with rich embroidery on the sleeves, and his medal dangled bold, and that old slouch Confederate hat was pulled upon his milky hair.

Folks lined five-deep above the slid bank where the clay shone bright—and all the little tufts of colored leaves a-rolling on the forest roof below. The hills stood high across, the hills lay mild and broken, up the creek and down. We had an auditorium surveyed by God and made to order.

My brother Tom brought folding chairs, and made Spring sit in one, but Mrs. Davis said that she preferred the grass; she spread her knitted shawl and sat upon it like the other middle-aged folks. My father Calhoun Royster squatted nigh to Spring, and offered him a wager on an Armstrong which had caught his fancy: Amy McPherson. She was a gyp belonging to old Ed (and she did finish in the money, as we found out some time later on).

Benjy was out there in the woods to take his proper station; and his wife was down below the hill, to loosen Little Bristles. When she and other owners came back upward through the oaks, climbing the deep-trod path, she went at once to see old Spring and Mrs. Davis; and she kissed them both, though people standing by said words were never spoken. They said that Mrs. Davis wiped her eyes, and clung to Camden's hand. And Springfield slowly beckoned her to sit between the two of them; so Camden knelt; and old Spring tweaked her hair just like he used to do.

All the crowd was hushed and fairly pious, waiting for the jump, and stretching ears and vision toward the gullies down below.

For we were certain how the Race would operate—the way it happened every year. There were some families of reds around, and reds will give the dogs more hours than a gray fox, by and large. And reds, unless they've worked a lot and gotten shrewd and wise, will operate in circles close to home.

I've seen them single out for twenty miles and more; but those were beeline foxes who had run a lot and whetted up their tricks. No wonder that we never made a cast on lower Heaven Creek, by general agreement, after June. We hoped to save the reds against the running of the Butternut, so they would circle close or maybe pace the boundaries, and never go too far from sight and sound.

Flying Jesse, it was, the son of Flying Bobby Ford, who made the jump. There were no babblers smelling

in those thickets; there hadn't been a voice uplifted till the fox was started true. Just moans and grunts among those earnest hounds; said judges who were in that neck of timber. For these were the cream of cream throughout our region. All talkative potlickers had been culled and left at home, along with former winners.

Then bango. Flying Jesse struck. He'd be scored for this, because he didn't have a babble in his heart. He had a good long note upon this strike, but it was coarse and rumbly; then he started in to chop, as usual. Lee Maitland stood aloft and beat his hat against his thigh; he pulled out forty dollars, then and there, offering to bet that Flying Jesse would scatter hounds from hell to breakfast.

Bango, another strike, and not ten seconds after Jesse hit. You heard excitement all around. "A double-header," everybody yelled. Widow Amy Leah Pettigrew got up and clapped her hands, because it was her Music Boss who'd made the second pickup. But Henry Pettigrew was never there to hear him (dead instead, two years and more). Amy Leah then began to cry.

They split and went to work. One bunch, with Flying Jesse captaining, tied to the fox down Broken Gulley; and the other gang had cut Heaven Creek in two within a minute, and giving voices like they'd made a sight.

Once in awhile we'd see them in amongst the trees, burning the ground apart, and people yelled that they had seen a fox. Many had big binoculars, and swept

them round, and once in awhile you'd glimpse the tiny figure of a judge alerted at his station down below.

Then it happened. Over all the yelling: *That's my Shinbone! There goes Honey Dew! Baby Butch, get in there and—* Over all the clamor, a new voice soared from out the trees.

It was close up on Flying Jesse, seeking to take the track away from him; and it's my guess that there was only one soul in our throng who reckoned he could do it.

Face after face was turned toward Springfield Davis. The outcry died along that claybank, and in a few more seconds all you'd hear was *owk* and chop and squall amid the hazy timber out beyond. Surmounted by an angel solo at the front.

Spring fought to climb from out that canvas folding chair, and I stepped close to help, for he was firm-intentioned on his rising.

"Spring!" came Ed Armstrong's fat accusing voice. "Brother, you never entered her, and yet she's running."

And others yelled, "He couldn't enter her! He couldn't enter Little Lady, because she won three years ago. But, by God, that's her, up there on top, right next to Flying Jesse!"

Spring Davis whispered, "Someone let her out. I had her locked up, safe at home. But that's her." He tried to strengthen his old tone, and make a peace with everyone. "I tell you, it's an accident. If Benjy— But no, he wasn't there. She must have burrowed—"

"She's *got it!*" Reverend Mont Adair was bellowing.

"She's grabbed the track. She's took it clean away from Flying Jesse!"

So it sounded, and at first I made no doubt, no more than anybody else. The voice of Little Lady, sure enough—the voice of Bugle Ann—the same as blew forever. A trumpet blast which seemed to grow from out dark earth where acorns mildewed, and maybe where neglected buckskin hunters stirred and heard within the soil.

But then I looked at Camden, trying to get up, and so I took her arm and so she stood.

Spring gazed, he saw the water running on her cheek. He couldn't well believe— And yet, and yet—

"Honey," he whispered, "isn't that Little Lady? Seems I can hear her, clear up on the heap. How did she—?"

The others heard and saw, and then it all came over them. It couldn't be, yet here it was: that scraggly high-arched thing she'd led upon her leash, and signed as Little Bristles.

Uncle Punch Lancey spoke the truth to all. "Gentlemen!" For once he had attention paid him even as he thought that he deserved. "And ladies! Number Seventeen, the one which Camden entered. I take it you all recall how Little Lady got enticed by an old tramp who come by, back two years ago last summer."

Old tramp or not, his offspring chained himself against that fox. He didn't scatter hounds—too many good dogs wading in, and they were tightly packed in speed and driving. But Little Bristles just the same was

throwing dirt against the faces of the ones who followed.

It was pathetic, for the bunch which trailed with Music Boss and Amy McPherson and the rest, progressing up the creek and back, were doomed to barest recognition except for what their owners gave them.

It was almost like the fox which Flying Jesse took at first (and Little Bristles took away from him) could understand that he was helping history. He cut to right, and right again, he crossed the Penny Branch, and right again; that brought him fairly underneath the clay-bank. Dangerous indeed, for kids were hanging at the edge, to try and see; and all of us might let our souls just wallow in the rare delicious sounds.

I looked at Spring. His deep eyes were raw-rimmed, and how they stared from caves beneath his cotton brows. He swallowed fast, his fingers shook; I feared he'd have a stroke before the hunting ended, and it had bare begun.

"That voice," he muttered often, kind of catching at his breath. "I bred her first. My Bugle Ann. And Little Lady has the same. That voice—it does breed on. And coming through the matrons' side."

You'd wonder what he saw—the bars up at Jeff City, maybe—prison bars he lay behind. And then his sound belief in ghosts, once he was pardoned, and heard the voice again. And all the fires he had sat beside, and all the faces vanished now, and all the hounds who loped from immemorial time.

It wasn't only voice to wonder at, for Little Bristles

had that track enfolded tight beneath his tearing paws, and so he kept it. He was a whirlwind on the drive, and he would stay. Lee Maitland still made offers of impressive bets, but his vociferation had a desperate ring; and when Roy Lancey covered twenty dollars Lee just put the rest away.

And Camden, weeping still, and kneeling there upon that brink, twitching her fingers on the flap of her limp leather bag. I reckoned that she heard the words of Benjy once again, defending her to Uncle Punch, and speaking of his wife with deference which nobody could disregard. She must have considered all the toilsome chases when she had worked in lower Jackson County, training this mutt-faced dog to do the task which he was doing like a champion.

And Benjy, out there, standing deep in dry leaves, watching with pad in hand whenever either pack would scorch up nigh him. How many hours when he lived bereft, nailed inside the coffin of his own bull-headedness? How many lone sad sleepy times, when he would toss in bed, and have delusions through his slumbers of the magic tongue which Davis dogs were giving?

Oh, it was a childish cussedness we had, for sure, when we abused our gifts. When menfolks let their women do the heavy work—the while they snored, pretending to have grippe or something—when actually they'd been upon the hilltop all night long. When children didn't have the food or clothes they should and could have had—because the fathers spent too

many hours in the brush with Bessie Bee or Young Regret, instead of cultivating corn.

It was a weakness, like my own Pa's taste for Fortyrod, or Ed Armstrong's love for pork which loaded him with fat for all his daily prayers. But there was a glory human tongue might not describe, when people measured it within their lives and found the proper balance. It must have been the same in ages past, when folks first intertwined with hounds away back somewhere in the marshy weeds.

THE FOX WENT in the ground more early than we might have wished, before the sun had hit the hazel-bush. Dogs were called. (Some owners had to spread out far and wide, to get their hounds safe belted up again. As I have said, there were a lot of reds around.)

The other fox, picked up by Music Boss and handled by his crowd—it holed a good ten minutes earlier. My father cussed, and said no fox of modern times would give our dogs the hours which they used to give. I was old enough now to half agree with him.

A bugle came from Camden's leather bag, the summons blew, and Little Bristles panted in as he was

bound to do by virtue of inheritance, at least upon his mother's side. But it was Benjy's hand which leashed him up, and offered him in turn to Camden, and she looked her gratitude. Something rare and softening possessed those two by now, so I gave thanks. We saw it in their faces, though they never banded words around.

Old Spring kept begging, "Let me look. Oh, let me see that dog!" They finally fetched up Little Bristles, burrs and muddy legs and slather, and people gathered near. Many would have laughed, except for recognizing a queer priestly glowing in the face of that old man.

He muttered, "Here's the number painted on him. Seventeen." It was done that way to help the judges. Spring touched the rugged coat, and said a word below his breath; he only raised his sight when Camden came.

"You know," he asked her and the rest of ignorant humanity, "what you've got?"

Low sun glimmered on that scarf she wore, but not so much as on her hair. "I guess you wouldn't call him—" she tried to chuckle, but a smile was all she made, and choking sounds—"quality. Except his voice. He's one of the same litter, Mr. Davis. Two had the bugle voice; I lost the other with pneumonia. So I trained him. Little Bristles."

Springfield Davis said, "That night." He spoke as if no other persons lived around; yet he knew that they were there, for his weak glance went skirmishing among the throng, and finding Benjy bright-eyed, way

over on the end. "Come here," he said, and Benjy came.

"That night, when I walked over to your place, you told me of this scrub a-hanging close to Little Lady. Said he was a vagabond. I tried to see him, but it was nigh on to black-dark by that time. Well, Benjy. Camden." Still paying no attention to the rest of us, though we were lapping every word, and puzzled half to death.

"You see," he said, "I thought they were extinct. All bred and gone, and dead and gone. You called him Bristles? That's what he was. A Whitlock Shaggy. A product of as fine a stock as ever ran."

We gaped and pushed and stared, listening, and wishing for extra ears that we might hear the better. Uncle Punch Lancey elbowed a pathway through the crowd, and stood and nodded with importance at every word Spring said, as if he'd known this weighty fact and miracle right from the start.

Long ago, said Springfield Davis. Oh, maybe when he himself was a boy. A man named Alf Whitlock, far over in Kentucky—he sharpened up a breed of hounds from Maryland. All shaggycoated and glass-eyed—not pretty, but possessed of force and staying stuff. They grew out of some old Irish strain; and some of them had hair like manes to hide their collars. And, said Spring Davis, they were the fathers of the Goodman hounds, and even showed up in ancient records of the Walkers.

Some of them were brought on, farther west, and some were even running down in Arkansas—long, long

ago, when he was young, Spring said. He'd seen them work like demons, and they had a voice to brag about.

But they were all absorbed or petered out, and scarcely any but the oldest hunters could know a Whitlock when they saw one—which they didn't nowadays. Younger folks would never even recognize the name.

So that was Bristles, bred self-determinedly to Little Lady; and Little Bristles was the pick of both. And where that tattered father of his came from, we could never guess. Perhaps a car upset somewhere and let him out. Perhaps someone had sold him, and he was carried far away, and then was trying doglike to go home, the day he wandered in.

It resembled fairy tales of yore (and yet as solid and favorable a chunk of truth as you could bite): the servant boy in rags, the worn wanderer scorned at castle gates—and all the time he was a king in his own right, if folks had only known. His beggarly trappings were but a disguise to hide the royalty. And—like in those old legends—a man who saw through patches and stains might then kneel down to worship.

Oh, a poor hound-dog could never own a castle, or have a pile of chests filled up with jewels and crowns and scepters, or blow the secret signal-whistle tied beneath his shirt, and thus fetch up an army of retainers with their lances and their loyalty. But he could possess a thing which might be pondered on as better still: a line of ancestors who'd done their feats, and all as staunch as knights who went to gallop in the Crusades.

Not then did Springfield Davis tell us all, nor did he know it all. The name of "Whitlock Shaggies" would be chewed and respected through many Butternuts; and other elder neighbors could write to breeders in Kentucky, and ask them what they knew about the Shaggies. So yarns would glisten with an extra polish when answers came from people who remembered.

Old Paddy's Shack—they'd tell of him. A Whitlock, bred right in the bone: and how he jumped a fox an hour after sundown, and drove that fox just like he owned it, up until he put one leg within a rail fence notch. Driving so hard, and hitting sudden in the dark, he snapped that bone as if it were a stick of stove-wood. He howled and struggled till his owner came to rescue him and pry him out.

Then Paddy's Shack tore loose from all restraint, and on three legs, and dragging that one limb he'd busted, he used fox-sense and ears instead of nose to meet the fox again. He went like mad and crooked lightning through the brush. He found the pack, and clung upon their rear, giving full voice and never quitting till the fox had gone to earth.

They found him then; and it was afternoon, and twenty miles away, or so the story goes. I reckon that his toes were sore enough on those three legs he'd trod upon. But on the leg he drug—

No claws, no toes, no pads. Just raw and ugly flesh and stump, not fit to touch or even look at. His owner must have bathed the bleeding stub with tears before he did his doctoring.

And Paddy's Shack, he was a mighty stud, hobbling on three legs around the farm from that day forth. But people couldn't bear to watch him when the sound of other hounds in cry went billowing among the hills. They'd try to stop their ears against the mourning which he made. And when he died they carved his name and likeness on a stone.

It could have been, we all considered, lineage like that from which old Bristles sprang. Fresh from thickets and the willows he'd traced his keen unerring path, and found a pen wherein the horn-mouthed marvel of our region waited him. Maybe if there is a brown god of wilderness and hunters, him it was who set the gate ajar, beyond the tiniest manipulation of Camden Davis. It was something to be decided in timber where the foxes ran.

IN BEST OFFICIAL manner the judges were assembled on the platform, and they read their tickets out, but you could scarcely hear the words of Benjy when it came his turn.

First in Hunting, Eight. First in Speed and Driving, Seventeen. First in Endurance, Seventeen. First in Voice, Seventeen.

Though the conclusion was foregone before they reached him, and after that too. Points had mounted sky-high for Seventeen, and the noise which people made might have flabbergasted wiser hounds than Little Bristles. He lay and heaved his sides, and let the children finger at his fuzzy coat.

The jug came forth, and Uncle Punch he made the presentation; but guns had started up before he rambled on his speech. You'd hear a volley and a bang, and then the dogs would lift their voices, and the kids would yelp in glee or terror; then more guns, and women holding hands across their ears. I felt my eyes grow wet, remembering the day when first I stood up, old enough to fire blanks there at the Butternut.

Cap Hurley's silver band shone bright. Camden stood quiet-eyed and beautiful when Uncle Punch took his crusty fist and wrapped her fingers round the handle in a ceremony of award. And, "Take a drink," the menfolks yelled. "Camden, you got to take a drink. You've won the Butternut!" but still she stood and squeezed her eyes shut, and made as if to run away.

"I can't," she cried. "I couldn't take a drink of that pure stuff. And—the jug's so heavy I can't even lift it. Uncle Punch," she said, "—and all. My husband's in the crowd somewhere. I'll ask him to come up and take the drink for me."

So folks pushed Benjy through the rows, and more than one man took a hard swat at his backside for his waywardness.

Then all who wanted to drink in ceremony, toasting the hound and owner who had won, they formed in line. I stood my turn and had my drink; my father Cal Royster was before me, taking longer swallows than the rest, and I could never gainsay him upon this day.

I looked out for the Davises, but they had gone by

now; and Little Bristles he was carried off as well. Old Spring and Mrs. Davis—Benjy and Camden had toted them away, clean over to the Delbert Royster place; and that was related to what my brother informed me on that morning.

Camden had halted there and left her baby with LaVonne. The child was waiting in a pen out on the porch, and long LaVonne described the scene that dusky evening and beamed to tell each memory of it.

There they came, the Davises, a-driving in at last. The child stood sober, holding up against the play-pen bars, and laughing only when he saw his mother and felt her hands on him again.

“Not all blood quarrels with other blood, you see,” said Camden, still with a tiny edge of hurt inside her voice.

Benjy said, “Camden, I’ll try to make it up to you. What do we call him?”

“Spring.”

Then they stood silent, Benjy holding up that child with bright black eyes so like his own, and watching as his Pa traversed the yard.

Old Spring came slowly; he was edging ninety in this year. His wife moved there, assisting him; and she was only fifty-nine, but she was crying. Her face was like a little lantern while she sought a first glimpse of that grandchild which such willfulness had held away from her.

It was delight to recognize the way that hound voice bred itself into the years a-coming. For, when the last

firm-spoken old Confederate—who was Springfield Davis—had gone his way among the cedar trees, the voices of the kin of Bugle Ann would still go echoing. Wisdom of the Davis kin would breed and manage them.

And Spring could rise through long imagining, and sally forth as in the flesh. Doubtless we would hear his bugle-note among the crickets and the berry vines, compelling hounds to come, and loving them forever. So did we all.



